



The
RABBIT'S RANSOM



CLARA *and*
WILL VAWTER



Class PZ7

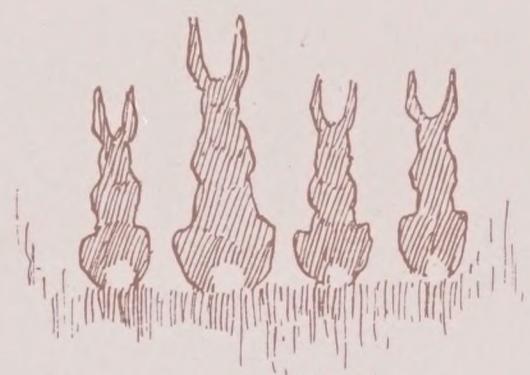
Book V473 R

Copyright N° _____

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.



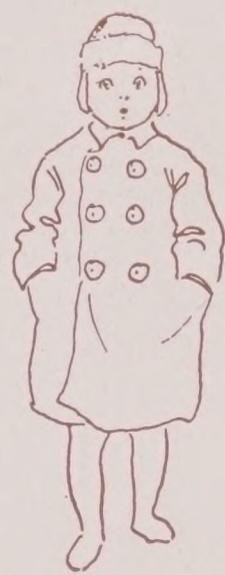






THE
RABBIT'S RANSOM







THE
RABBIT'S RANSOM

BEING A NEW EDITION OF
“OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM”

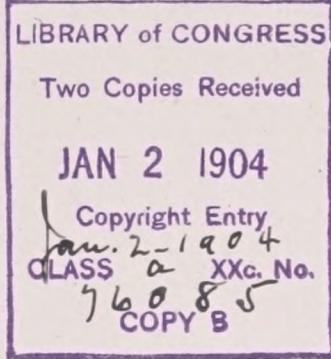
CLARA VAWTER

WITH
ILLUSTRATIONS

BY
WILL VAWTER

INDIANAPOLIS
THE BOBBS-MERRILL COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

PZ 7
V473
R



Copyright, 1899, 1902
by
The Bowen-Merrill Company

All rights reserved

THE BOWEN-MERRILL COMPANY

BROOKLYN, N.Y.

PRESS OF
BRAUNWORTH & CO.
BOOKBINDERS AND PRINTERS
BROOKLYN, N.Y.

04-1816

TO OUR MOTHER

To WHOM WE OWE ALL THAT IS OF MERIT
IN THIS BOOK.



CONTENTS

	Page
DEDICATION	XI
THE RABBIT'S RANSOM	23
HIS CHRISTMAS TURKEY	55
IT WORRIES ME	81
GRANDFATHER'S GLASSES	82
LITTLE LADY, COME AND PLAY	85
ALWAYS DINNERTIME	88
GRANDPA'S LITTLE MAN	93
THE BAKER'S SON	95
HOW ANNETTA WAS CURED	101
THE GENIUS	132
MOTHER'S LITTLE MAN	134
THE OAK TREE'S SECRET	137
THE PROVIDENT OLD MAN	165
THE REFORMATION OF BIDDY	167



ILLUSTRATIONS

ANNETTA HELPS MOVE	25 ✓
SOAPSUP ICING	31 ✓
ELEVEN OR FOURTEEN CENTS	35 ✓
HE WAS A VERY LARGE BOY	39 ✓
THE RABBIT'S NEW OWNER	43 ✓
HIS OWN LITTLE HOME	49 ✓
THEY MUST BE VERY SAVING	59 ✓
THE BIRD AND ANIMAL BOOK	65 ✓
PAINTING A TURKEY	69 ✓
WITH ITS WING OVER HIS SHOULDER	73 ✓
AND IT'S A WILD TURKEY	77 ✓
GRANDFATHER'S GLASSES	83 ✓
ALWAYS DINNER TIME	91 ✓
THE BAKER'S SON	97 ✓
HE WAS BLACK AND WHITE	103 ✓
THEY TIED A BLACK VEIL	107 ✓

ILLUSTRATIONS—*Continued*

HE FOLLOWED THE CAT AROUND	111
COME INTO THE HOUSE, JAMIE	115
SOME MEDICINE FOR TOM	121
THE DOCTOR'S CART	125
MOTHER'S LITTLE MAN	135
ROBBERS UNDER HIS BRANCHES	139
BENDING OVER HIS BENCH	143
ABOUT THE MORTGAGE	147
A HEAVY SACK, TOO	151
I TOLD YOU	159
THE PROVIDENT OLD MAN	163
UNDER A TUB	171
THE GROCER DROVE A THRIVING TRADE	175
HAVE WENT AND BRUNG THEIR HEN	187
AS THE CHILDREN WERE GOING HOME	191



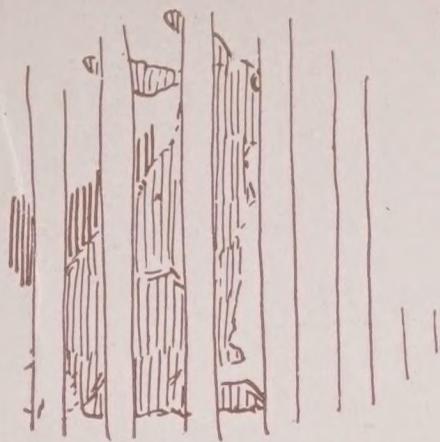


IN THE MORNING of our days, then our happy fancies glide
Out into the golden future, like a leaf upon the tide
Of a swiftly-flowing river, that hurls its way along
Through sunny fields, and meadowlands, where every thrush's song,
As he sings among the branches, floods the world with melody,
Like some happy-hearted messenger of things that are to be,
For though youth has many sorrows, and the child-heart sadly grieves
Yet the sun is ever shining through the trailing willow leaves;
And we're looking ever forward to the future through the haze
Of the promise and the glory of the morning of our days.

IN THE EVENING of our days, when the oars softly dip
Into strange and silent waters, then our wayward fancies slip
Back along the way we've journeyed, where the sun's departing glow
Falls in silent benediction o'er the lands of long ago,
Then the flowers of memory bloom for us, the thrush's song is heard,
Like the solemn, sweet renewal of a promise long deferred;
And the sorrows and the heartaches that we've suffered, we forget,
But the joys we used to know—ah! they are with us yet.
For we're looking ever backward through the dim and misty haze,
In the calm and peaceful twilight of the evening of our days.



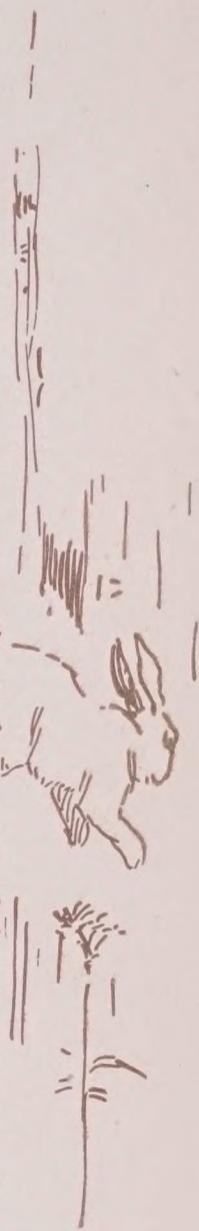
The Rabbit's Ransom



The Rabbit's Ransom

THE rabbit was owned by a boy. All day long he had to sit in a little box with slats across the front of it so that he couldn't possibly escape, and as he pressed his trembling nose against the prison bars and looked out upon the unfamiliar scenes about him and listened to the jingle of the bells, as the street cars went clattering by, he was often very much afraid, and very lonely, too. Then he thought of his little house in the cabbage field, far away, and of his wife and children, and he wondered if they had been annoyed by hunters that season, or if his little ones had had the ear-ache much during the cold weather. He had made so many unsuccessful attempts to escape, that he had long ago given up all hope of ever seeing his friends again, and grew more and more dejected as the days went by.

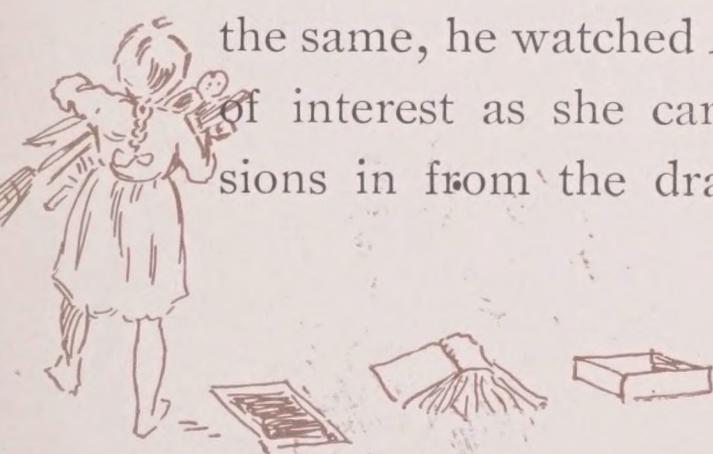
(23)





He had been a captive a good many weeks when he first saw Jamie. Now, Jamie was a very little boy, but he could go on errands for his mother, and one morning in the early spring, as he was returning from the grocery with his arms full of bundles, he caught sight of the rabbit; so he hastily laid down his load on the sidewalk, and climbed upon the fence and looked very wonderingly at the little stranger from the country. He stayed such a long time that his mother grew alarmed at his absence and came to look for him, and when she had lifted him down from the fence, and was leading him home, she said:

“Did you know there was a little girl moving in next door to us? Now you’ll have somebody to play with.” But Jamie was thinking of the rabbit, so he said he didn’t care much about playing with girls. All the same, he watched Annetta with a great deal of interest as she carried her various possessions in from the dray and put them on the



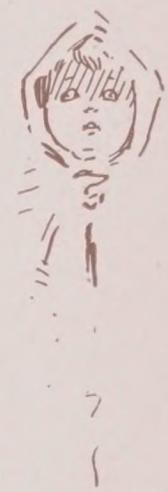




The Rabbit's Ransom

27

porch of the house next door. She kept running back and forth and getting in everybody's way, and her mother was so continually pulling her out from under the burly draymen's feet, that it seemed to Jamie she would certainly be crushed by some of the heavy furniture. Then, when her mother began to sweep out the rooms, Annetta took her little broom and followed around after her and swept very industriously in all the corners, and raised a great deal of dust. And after she had helped her mother make everything neat and tidy and felt that she had a few moments' leisure to devote to her own affairs, she put on her mittens and pinned a little checkered breakfast shawl over her head so very tight that her cheeks bulged out like red apples, and went into the back yard to look after her own housekeeping, and to make excavations for a mud-pie bakery. Now Annetta had been housekeeping for some time, and knew exactly how to go about it, so very soon she had made her a little house of chips and





built a stove in one corner and put her dinner on to cook. Then, with a weary sigh, she sat down on a brick to wait until it should be done. While she was waiting she looked up and saw Jamie regarding her narrowly through a hole in the fence.

"Hello," she said, "is that where you live?"

"I know where there's a rabbit," said the little boy.

So that's how they became acquainted, and soon they were the very best of friends.

It was a long time, though, before Jamie would take the little girl to see the rabbit, for it is a great privilege to be on terms of intimacy with a rabbit, and he was afraid she might not quite appreciate it; but when at last he did take her, he saw that he had been greatly mistaken, for Annetta, too, had lived in the country before she became Jamie's neighbor, and spoke so very knowingly of rabbits and their ways that the little boy was filled with admiration; and one day when her mother



The Rabbit's Ransom

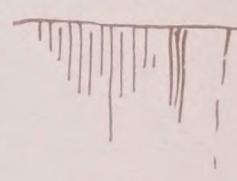
29

sent her to the grocery for a cabbage, she pulled off all the outside leaves and handed them across the fence to the boy and said: "Will you please give these to your rabbit?" and the rabbit ate them very gratefully, and seemed much cheered and refreshed.

It was Saturday afternoon. The ground was very black and warm, and the fresh, damp odor of spring was in the air. Jamie's mother had come over to see Annetta's mother, and both were working away in the kitchen, making cakes, evidently, for Annetta had seen a great number of eggs upon the kitchen table, and her mother had told her to go into the yard and play and take good care of Jamie. So she gave him some soapsuds to beat up for icing, while she made a cake of her own.

"As soon as you get that done," she said, by way of encouragement, "then we will go and make our nest."

"Our what?" said the little boy, wonderingly.





"Our nest," said Annetta, working away busily, "for rabbits to lay eggs in. You know to-morrow is Easter, and mamma said we should make our nest together in our yard." But Jamie only looked the more bewildered.

"Why, Annetta," he said, "hens lay eggs, rabbits don't."

Annetta shut her lips very tight and regarded him scornfully for a moment out of the corner of her eye; but he looked so very little as he sat on the brick, and he was doing his work so very well, that her heart relented; so she just sat down beside him and explained to him about the rabbit, and how she had always made a nest under the apple-tree in the orchard at home, and found the rabbit's eggs there on Easter morning.

"But they never laid me any," said Jamie, shaking his head doubtfully.

"Well," answered Annetta, "maybe you never made any nest; rabbits ain't going to lay eggs on fences, I guess."





But still Jamie wasn't convinced, and he felt a little bit slighted too. He followed Annetta dutifully, while she walked about the yard looking out a good location for the nest; all the time he was thinking very hard, and soon he arrived at the root of the difficulty.

"I'll tell you how it is," he said, stopping before the little girl with his arms full of straw and chips which he had been collecting; "of course, when you lived in the country, there were lots of rabbits there to lay you eggs, but there ain't any rabbits in cities, and that's why they never laid any for me."

Now, somehow, this suggestion struck a cold chill to Annetta's little heart. She had often been homesick for the green fields, and now if the rabbits were going to desert her, that was too much! She looked out across the muddy street, and at the high smoky buildings, and at the people going busily up and down. She tried to go bravely on with her work, but Jamie could see that from time to time she wiped her eyes



secretly upon the corner of her little shawl, and got her face very dirty in consequence. He was sorry for her, but he could think of no comforting words, so he just put his hand into his pocket and drew out a buckeye, which Annetta had long coveted, and pressed it into her little, cold, muddy hand as a silent expression of sympathy. There must have been a subtle magic in the gift, for suddenly a bright thought struck Annetta.

"Jamie," she said, jumping up and brushing the straw from her apron, "I know what we can do;" then, although there was nobody to overhear, she leaned over and whispered something in the little boy's ear, and as he listened, his eyes grew very round and eager; he nodded his head approvingly. "It'll take money, though," said Annetta, straightening up. "How much have you got?"

"Oh, ever so much," said Jamie, "eleven or fourteen cents, I 'spect. I'll go and get it."

He went scrambling through the hole in the





fence and soon returned with all his wealth. Annetta, too, brought her bank from the house, and they made haste to break the doors in and deposit their savings on the ground. Annetta made several attempts to count the money, but obtained such a bewildering variety of answers that she gave it up in despair. Merely remarking loftily that she thought it would be a plenty, she put it in her apron pocket, and Jamie helped her pin the pocket so that it couldn't possibly lose out; then she took the little boy's hand and they walked briskly around the house and out into the street.

Straight to the rabbit's box they went, but they didn't stop to look over the fence now; instead, they went boldly into the yard and Annetta knocked as loudly as she could upon the door of the house where the boy who owned the rabbit lived. Soon the door was opened and the owner of the rabbit stood looking down upon them. He was a very



large boy. His hands were chapped and covered with warts; he had a freckled face and round, thoughtful eyes. The children had never been so close to him before, and Jamie was a little bit confused, but Annetta stood up very straight and stated their mission with business-like brevity.

"We came to speak to you about your rabbit," she said. "We wanted to know if you would sell him to us; or, if you don't want to sell him, we thought maybe you could tell us where we could get a good rabbit."

"We'd rather have this one, though," Jamie put in, "because we are acquainted with him. We always meant to buy him and let him out, anyhow, as soon as we got money enough, for we don't think he likes to stay in that little box very well."

"We are particular about getting our rabbit this afternoon," Annetta went on, in a kindly explanatory voice, "because we want one to lay





us Easter eggs to-night. Do you know if your rabbit is a good layer?"

The boy had not had his rabbit over Easter, so he couldn't say as to his capabilities; moreover, he had not thought of selling him. He walked slowly across the yard and leaned upon the rabbit's box, and the children stood before him silently while he looked across the street and seemed to be thinking.

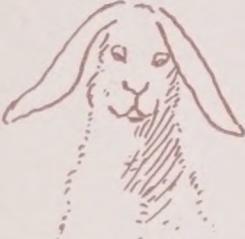
"How much will you give for him?" he said at last.

Annetta hastily unpinned her pocket and poured their savings in a little heap on the top of the rabbit's box, and watched the boy's face anxiously while he counted the money.

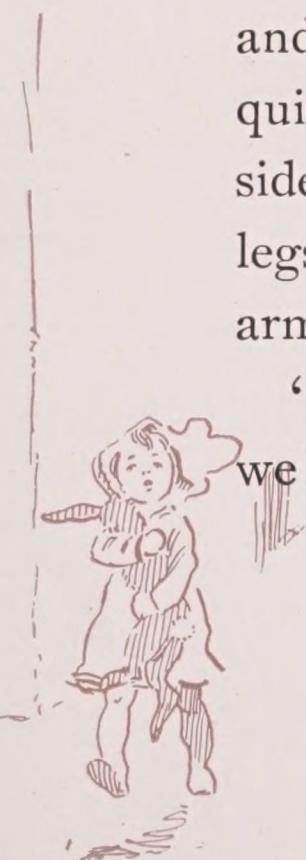
"Twelve cents," he said, meditatively; "I'd lose on him at that price. I paid a dime for him in the first place, and I've taught him tricks since."

Then he looked at his property reflectively. Now, the rabbit was very anxious to be sold to these good friends of his; so when he





saw he was being observed by his owner, he hung down his ears and tried to look as worthless and "no-account" as possible, and succeeded so very well that the boy thought himself lucky to be rid of him at any price; so he swept the money into his pocket, and said he believed he would sell his rabbit and keep a turtle instead.



Jamie squeezed Annetta's hand tight, and even the little girl's lip trembled as the boy undid a door at the back of the box and took the weary prisoner out, and put him into her outstretched arms; the rabbit rested his chin upon his new owner's shoulder and waved his ears joyfully, as she walked quickly away; and Jamie trotted sturdily at her side and held fast hold of one of the rabbit's legs, which hung down under the little girl's arm.

"We had better show him the nest, hadn't we?" said Jamie, when they reached home;

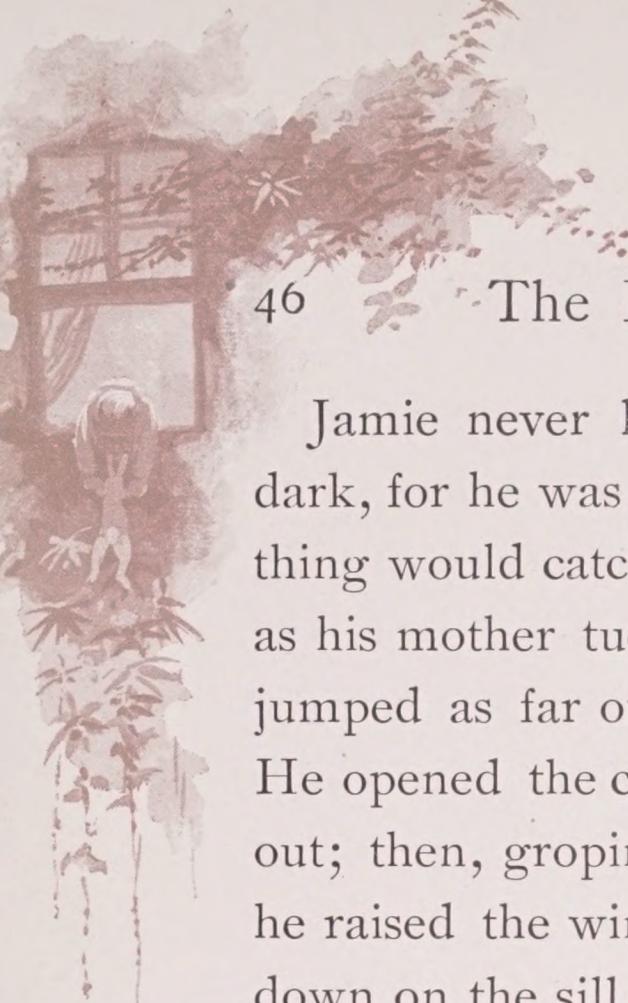


but somehow Annetta felt that this would be a reflection upon the sagacity of the rabbit.

"No," she said confidently, "he can find any nest that ever was; and now, Jamie," she continued, impressively, "you can take him and put him away until to-night. I'd keep him myself but I haven't any good place, and when you go to bed you put him out of the window. Then as soon as he has laid our eggs, he can go home to his folks. Now don't you go to sleep and forget about it!" and Annetta shook her head severely at the little boy, whose eyes were so wide open it seemed as if he would never be able to go to sleep again.

Then she handed the rabbit to him and folded his arms carefully about it, and Jamie went staggering into the house and hid his old friend in the closet of his own little room, and when his mother came home she found him sitting in solemn silence, with his back against the closet door, trying to look very unconcerned and careless.





46 The Rabbit's Ransom

Jamie never liked to get out of bed in the dark, for he was always a little bit afraid something would catch his feet, so to-night as soon as his mother tucked him in and left him, he jumped as far out into the room as he could. He opened the closet door and took the rabbit out; then, groping his way through the gloom, he raised the window softly and set the rabbit down on the sill.

It was a very dark night. There was no moon, and even the stars had hidden themselves away behind the great black clouds which were hurrying across the sky, and the night wind, as it blew in upon Jamie's face and ruffled the rabbit's fur, felt very damp and chilly. The little boy held his old friend close in his arms, and somehow hated to let him go, for they had known each other a long time and he felt that he might never see him again. He laid his cold cheek down on the soft, warm fur, and smoothed the rabbit's ears affectionately.



"You just lay me and Annetta some eggs," he whispered, "and then you can go home;" and with a farewell pat he leaned far from the window and dropped the rabbit to the ground beneath; the next moment he saw him go, like a gray streak, across the fence into Annetta's yard; but still he couldn't sleep.

He was afraid the rabbit mightn't be able to find the nest, for even Annetta didn't know everything. So, by and by, he ventured to peep out again. It was still very dark, but over in Annetta's yard a little light was moving stealthily about in the direction of the nest, and something or somebody went stumbling over the stove in the bakery. Jamie wove his cold toes together for very happiness, for he knew then that the rabbit was looking for the nest with a lantern.

He went to bed very well contented after that, and all night long he dreamed he was an Easter egg; so that early in the morning, when Annetta came knocking on the window, he didn't

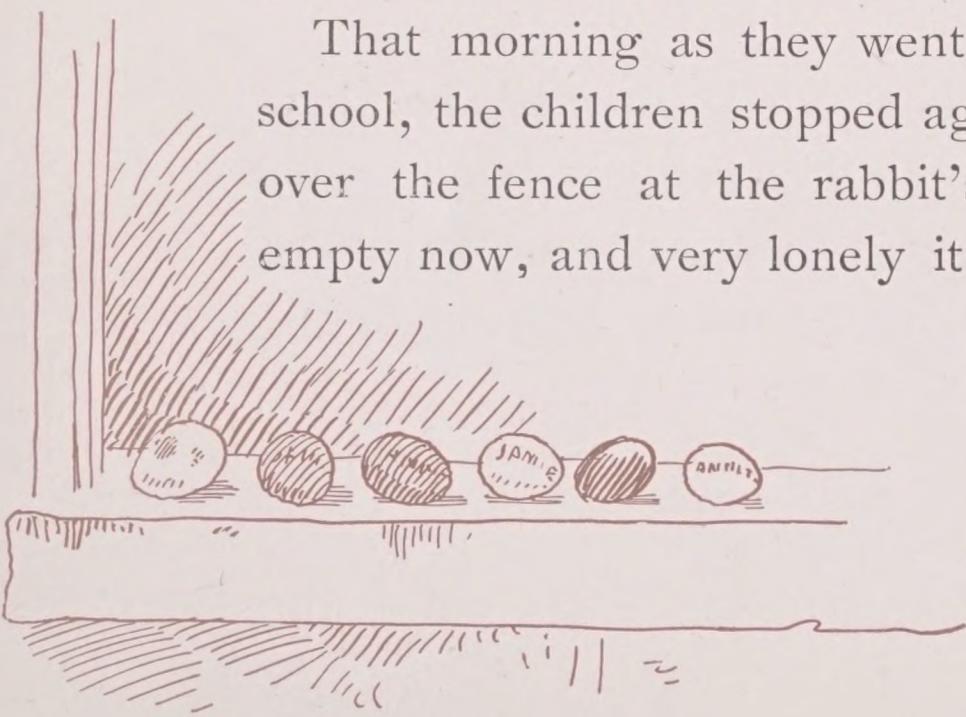


answer for a little bit, for he thought it was just somebody tapping on his shell; but Annetta kept on knocking very energetically; then she called out and said:

"Get up and see the eggs," and by the time Jamie got to the window, she had reached down into her little apron, which she had gathered up in front of her, and arranged upon the sill eight gorgeous Easter eggs.

"Half of 'em's yours and half of 'em mine," she said, stepping back so that he might get an unobstructed view of the rabbit's handiwork; and, indeed, this was true; for that there might be no mistake about it, the rabbit had printed Jamie's name upon four of the eggs and Annetta's name on four, and very good printing it was, too, for a rabbit to do.

That morning as they went by to Sunday-school, the children stopped again and looked over the fence at the rabbit's box. It was empty now, and very lonely it looked, with a





little piece of fur sticking on a nail at the back of it.

"I hope he'll get home all right," said Jamie softly.

"And I hope no dogs will chase him," whispered Annetta.

But they needn't have feared for the wise old rabbit, for he traveled fast and well, and that very Easter night he sat happily before the door of his own little house, with his wife and children gathered around him; and again he watched the moon rise over the cabbage field, and the shadow of the fences in the road looked very sharp and black, and the church bells ringing in the city sounded faint and far away. Then a number of the rabbit's friends dropped in and shook him warmly by the paw, and said how glad they were he had returned in safety from his long captivity; and his children sat about his feet and clasped their little knees and listened with



their eyes and ears wide open, while their father told them of the lonely box in the busy city and of the many weary days that he had passed there, and of the children who had set him free at last.

"And," said the rabbit, as he knocked the ashes from his pipe, and leaned back complacently in his easy chair, "they are very good little children, and I mean to remember them every Easter." And I am glad to say that the rabbit keeps his word.





His Christmas Turkey



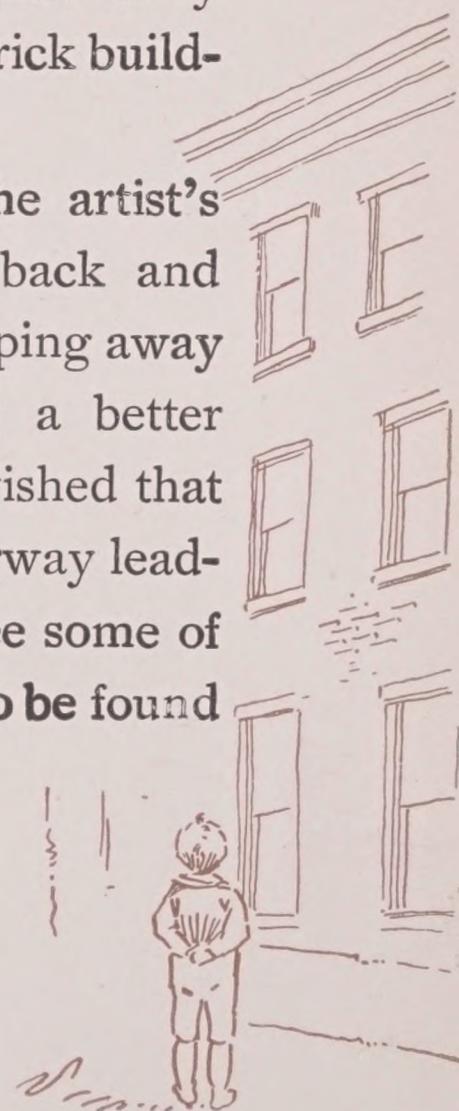
His Christmas Turkey

When Philip was five years old, he first realized that the lack of money is an unpleasant thing, and sometimes hampers one.

The artist had found that out long ago, for he was thirty.

Philip lived with his mother in a little cottage in the suburbs of a certain city, no difference where; the artist lived just across the alley from them, at the top of a very tall brick building.

Philip would often look up at the artist's window, and watch him moving back and forth before his easel, sometimes stepping away with his head on one side, to get a better view of his picture; and the child wished that he might climb the dark, narrow stairway leading to that skylighted room, and see some of the wonderful things he knew were to be found





in studios; but he never quite mustered up courage to make the journey.

Nevertheless, the artist was of a pleasant disposition, and had shown a desire to be neighborly, for when Philip had had the measles, and his mother would be shaking the rugs on the side porch, more than once the great man had put his head out of the window, and said: "How is your little boy this morning?"

Philip had heard him. But he felt that the respect had been paid rather to the disease than to himself, and now that he was over the measles he hesitated to renew the acquaintance.

It was in the evening, two days before Christmas. Philip sat on a stool at his mother's feet, with his chin resting on her knees. She was making him an overcoat, and he watched the proceeding with much interest, for it was being made out of an old dress-skirt of her own, and the little boy had a sickening misgiving that it might, after all, betray its feminine

origin, and develop into some sort of a girl's garment. But his last fear vanished when he saw the deft fingers cunningly fashion it into a double-breasted affair, and sew six great manly-looking buttons on the front of it.

He stood up now to try it on; and when it was fastened up, the big buttons glittered in the firelight and looked like plates, and Philip's well-fed stomach like a table set for six people.

Perhaps that was what put the notion of a Christmas dinner into his mind. At any rate, as his mother knelt on the floor before him with her needle in her mouth, and pulled the bottom of the little coat even, Philip beat her softly on the head with his damp, warm fists, and said:

"Mamma, when are we going to get our turkey for Christmas?"

Then his mother sat flat down on the floor, and pulled him down beside her, and explained to him that she was afraid they could hardly afford to get a turkey that Christmas. A big





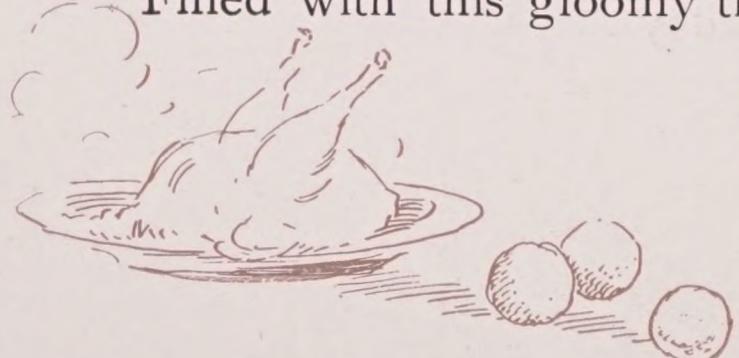
turkey would be entirely too much for just herself and Philip and Jane, the little maid, and since the father was gone (there were tears in her voice and eyes now) they must be very saving, and not spend any more money than they could possibly help. Philip listened to her in wide-eyed astonishment; then the corners of his mouth got square. His mother, the little coat, and the big buttons, all vanished in a mist of tears; he had his first tiff with poverty, and cried.

He dried his eyes presently, and wandered over to the window. He pressed his tear-stained nose against the cold glass until it grew leprosely white, and looked out into the darkness.

There was a bright light in the artist's room; he was going to have a turkey for Christmas, no doubt; and perhaps oranges—who knows?

Philip was quite sure that he and his mother were the only turkeyless people in the whole world.

Filled with this gloomy thought, he turned







His Christmas Turkey

61

away and tried to amuse himself by looking at his bird and animal book. This was his greatest treasure. It had tided him over many difficulties, and had been a great comfort to him in all his troubles; but somehow it had lost its charm to-night. The kangaroo carrying her babies did not look nearly so funny as usual, and the pink bear chasing the hunter in a yellow coat was not so ferocious as Philip could have wished. He turned the leaves slowly and despondently. Suddenly he stopped, and looked most intently at a certain picture. He had seen it often before; but to-night it had a new significance for him. He spread the book out on the floor, lay down before it, and then, with much difficulty and many mistakes, he spelled out the description, which was printed in big black letters under the picture. Having accomplished this feat, he shut the book, and put it away in the most secret manner; then he dragged his little chair up to the fire, sat down, and



crossed his legs. And his look was the look of a man who has made a great resolve.

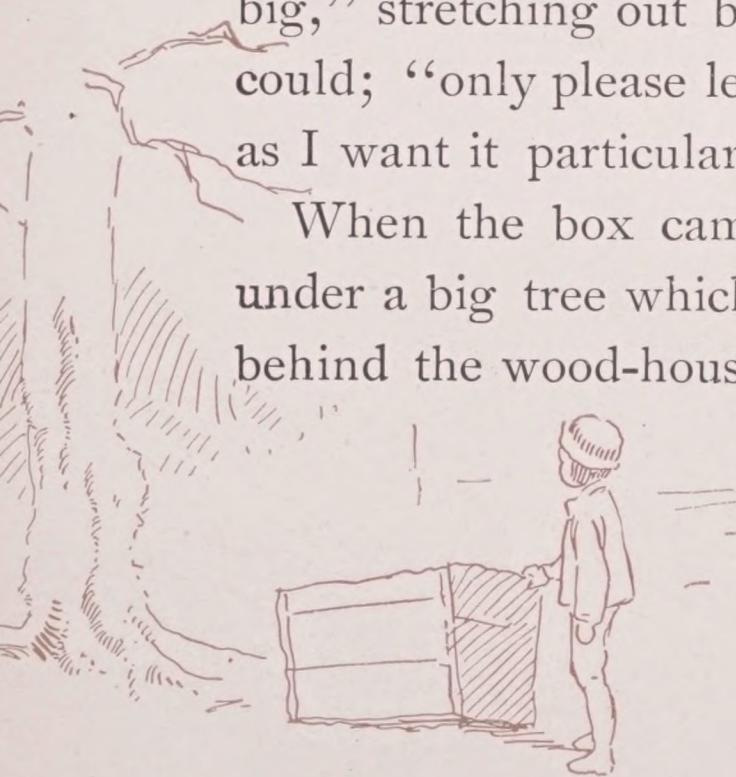
Philip was up early the next morning. His mother had to go into town on business, and would be gone two hours at least. Jane was busy in the front part of the house, and that gave him ample opportunity to carry out the scheme which had been running in his head all night. He stood at the kitchen window until the grocer's boy came to take the orders. Then he hailed him.

"Jim," he said, "when you come back with the things, I wish you'd bring me a box, will you?"

"What kind of a box?" asked Jim.

"O, any kind," said Philip; "about so big," stretching out both his arms as far as he could; "only please let it be a very strong one, as I want it particularly for something."

When the box came, Philip dragged it out under a big tree which stood in the back yard behind the wood-house. Then he put on his



cap and his mittens, got a hatchet, a pocketful of nails, and an old, rusty hand-saw, and set about knocking one end out of the box, and demolishing things generally.

More than once he pounded his thumb and had to stop and pull off his mitten to ascertain the extent of the damage done; but he wasn't to be daunted by any accident so trivial, and worked away as diligently as though he really knew what he was doing.

The artist, disturbed by the noise, put his head out of the window to find the cause.

"What on earth is that child doing now?" he said to himself, when he caught sight of Philip standing in the midst of the flying chips and laying about him with his hatchet like a woodman. Then closing the window softly, he came down stairs, crossed the alley, and leaned over the fence.

"Look here, youngster," he said suddenly, "do you know you're making an awful racket? You'll break every pane of glass on the square."



Philip turned around, and was overcome with confusion when he found himself observed.

"I'll be done in just a minute now," he said, nervously, "as soon as I get these two boards nailed on."

"What are you making, anyhow?" said the artist; "a barn?"

Philip shook his head. "No," he answered solemnly; "a trap."

The artist opened his eyes wide. "A trap? going to catch mice in it?"

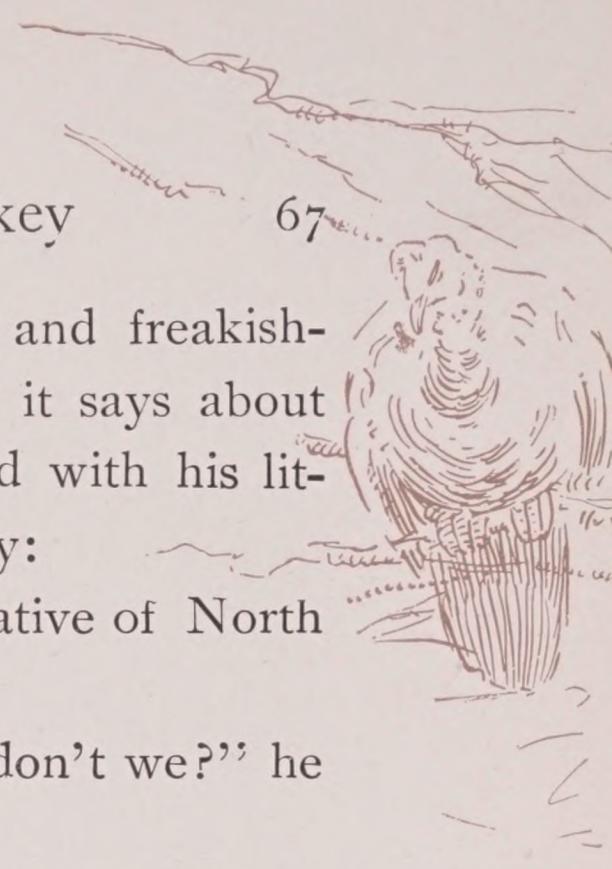
Philip again shook his head very decidedly. "No; a turkey, a wild turkey," he hastened to explain, seeing that the artist looked surprised. "I read about them in a book I've got. If you'll wait, I'll show it to you."

He ran into the house, and came back almost immediately with the animal and bird book. He climbed on the fence beside the artist, spread the book open on his knees, and turned the pages hastily.

"Here it is," he said at last, pointing to the







picture of a very highly-colored and freakish-looking bird; "and this is what it says about 'em." Pointing out each word with his little mitten hand, he read slowly:

"A Wild Turkey.—It is a native of North America."

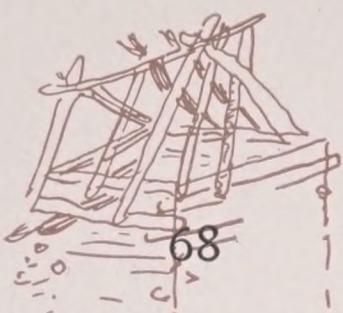
"We live in North America, don't we?" he inquired.

"I believe we do," said the artist; and Philip went on:

"Is a native of North America. Its plumage is very bright. It eats insects, seeds, young frogs, and corn. It roosts in trees, and is sometimes caught in traps."

"And so," said the artist, when Philip finished reading, "you think you can catch a wild turkey, do you? Have you ever seen any around here?"

"No," Philip admitted that he never had; "but then I never looked for any before," he explained, "and I should think there would be some, because there's a tree they could roost in."



I never made a trap before," he continued, looking somewhat doubtfully at the nondescript building he had erected; "but it's a good, stout one, and I should think it would do to catch a turkey in, wouldn't you?"

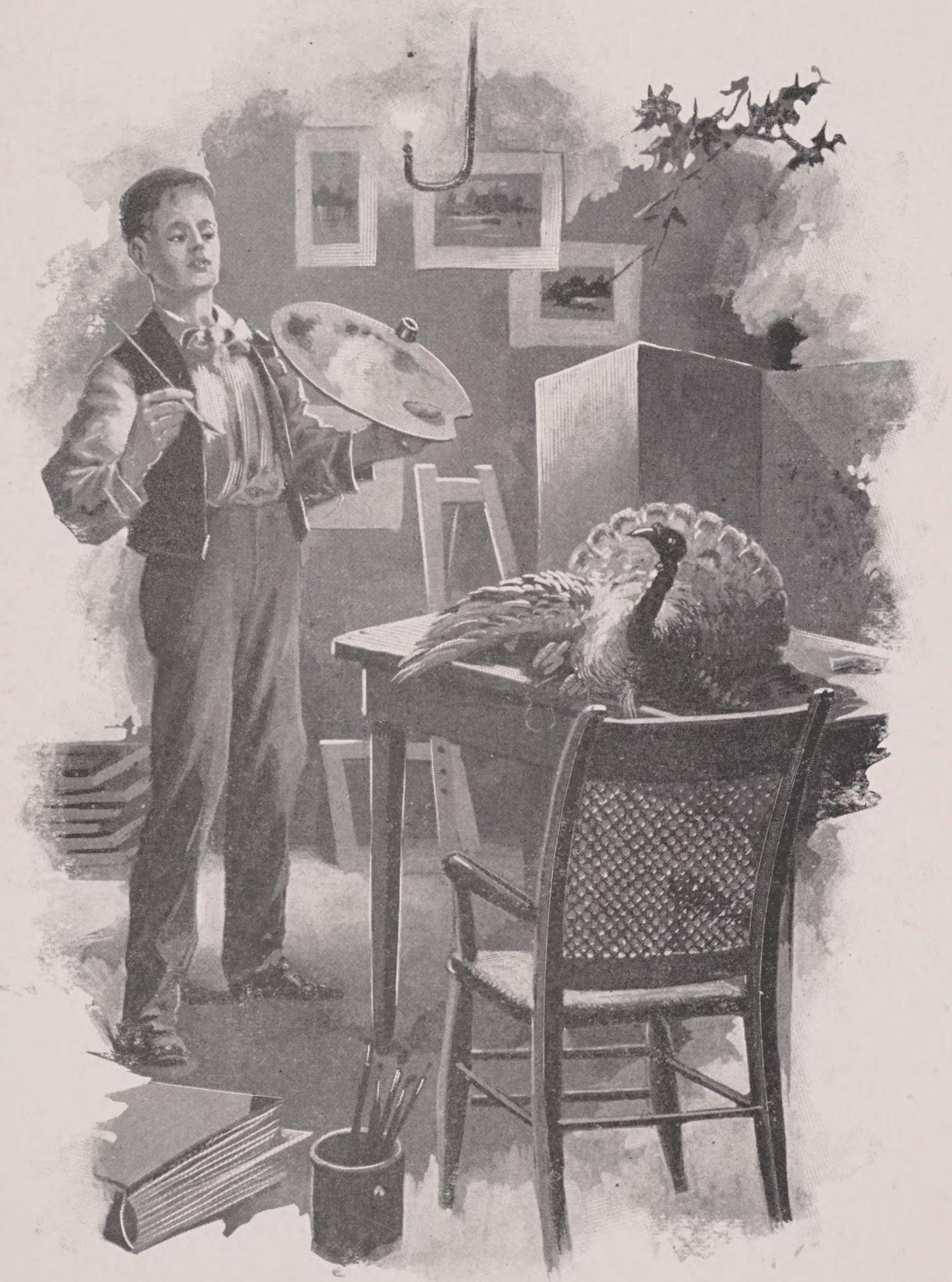
The artist assured him that any self-respecting bird ought to be glad to be caught in such a trap, and Philip looked relieved.

"I hope I can catch one," he said, with a little sigh, leaning his chin on his hand, "because if I don't, we're not going to have any turkey at our house."

"Well, of course, I couldn't say certainly," replied the artist, "but I've suspected for a long time that this alley abounded in some sort of wild game, and if you have luck to-night we'll go hunting every little while; I've got a gun."

Philip winced at the implied disbelief, and the artist hastened to reassure him.

"You go on," he said, more seriously, as he lifted the little boy off the fence, "and set your



trap, and if there's a wild turkey in this part of the country, I bet he'll find it."

That night the most unaccountable sounds floated out through the keyhole of the artist's room. The landlady was filled with apprehension. She ran up and down stairs, and fluttered about on the landing, in a state of the greatest excitement.

"Hold on there," she heard the artist say. "I'm not goin' to hurt you; keep still, can't you?" And then he chuckled, and there followed much flapping of wings and a volley of angry gobblets.

The landlady knew better than to question the doings of her eccentric lodger. So she went up to her room, and locked herself in.

"If anybody's found dead in the morning," she said, "I wash my hands of the whole affair;" and she went to bed, and pulled the covers up around her head to shut out the sounds.

It was scarcely light on Christmas morning

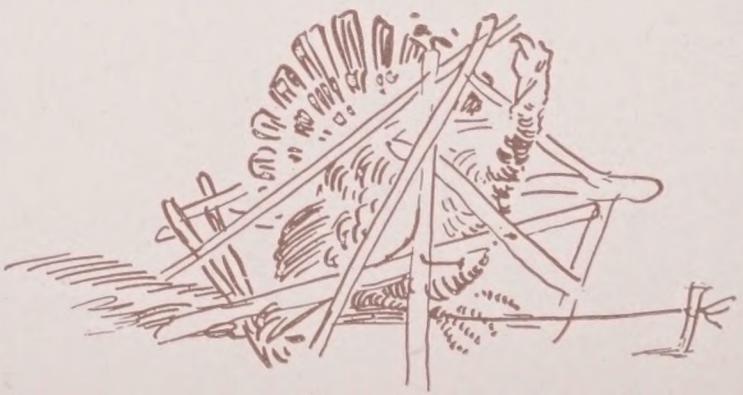




when Philip awoke, and sat up in bed, having satisfied himself that it was really getting daylight. He dressed himself, and crept softly into the quiet kitchen. There is something solemn about the gray stillness of the very early morning, and as Philip unlocked the back door and stood on the steps, he felt a little bit lonely and afraid.

There was a light fall of snow on the ground. The air was filled with flying flakes, which stung his cheeks sharply. A little streak of red was beginning to show in the east, and somewhere, far away, he heard a chicken crow sleepily.

He put Jane's shawl over his head, and stumbled down the path in the direction of his trap. Suddenly he stopped. Was that a gobble? Philip's legs nearly gave way with excitement, and his heart pounded like a runaway horse. The gobble sounded again, and he flew around the corner of the wood-house. Then, with a little scream of delight, he dropped down in







the snow; for there in the trap, flopping and kicking about, was the biggest turkey he had ever seen. A wild turkey. Philip was sure of that.

He had some trouble in getting hold of the unwieldy prisoner; but at last he gathered it up in his arms, and started for the house, with one of its wings hanging over his shoulder, and the other trailing on the ground. He had to drop it two or three times in order to rest himself, and if this discreet turkey hadn't been thoughtful enough to tie its legs together before it ensnared itself, it certainly would have escaped.

Philip finally reached the house after much struggling. He burst open the door, and dropped his treasure on the kitchen floor.

"Mamma! Jane! come here quick!" he panted.

Jane came running in a state of partial negligence, and then his mother.

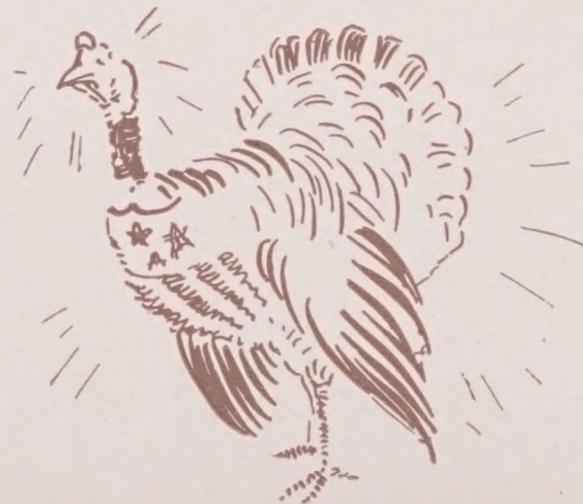
"What's the matter? what is it?" she cried, catching him up in her arms. "Where did it come from?"



And then, with much hysterical sobbing and laughing, Philip hid his face on his mother's shoulder, and the whole story came out; how he had read about the wild turkey, and had set a trap to catch one to surprise his mother and Jane; how the artist had come down and talked to him, and expressed a great interest in the scheme.

"And it is a wild turkey, you know," said Philip, in conclusion, "'cause just look at its feathers, how bright they are!"

If bright feathers established its right to wild turkey-hood, there could be little doubt as to the identity of the phenomenal bird flopping about on the floor. Never did a bird of paradise possess such brilliant plumage. Its legs were a deep crimson, and its feet were gilded; one wing was green, and the other pink. It gloried in a flaming yellow tail, a blue head, and a bright lavender back. Its patriotism was established by its "red, white, and blue breast," and a most suspicious odor of fresh paint hung over it all.



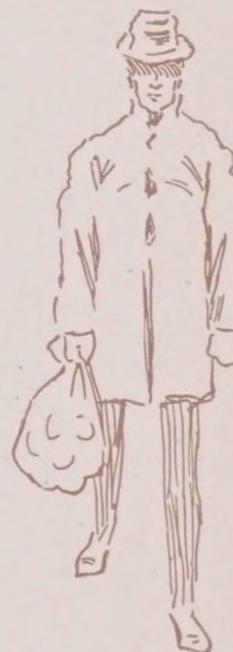
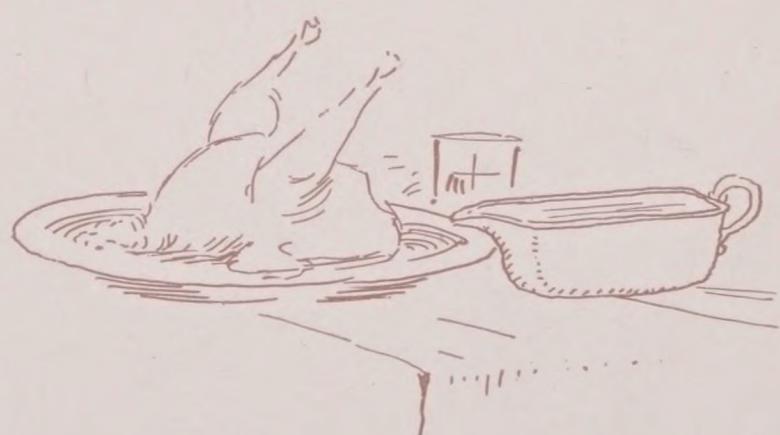


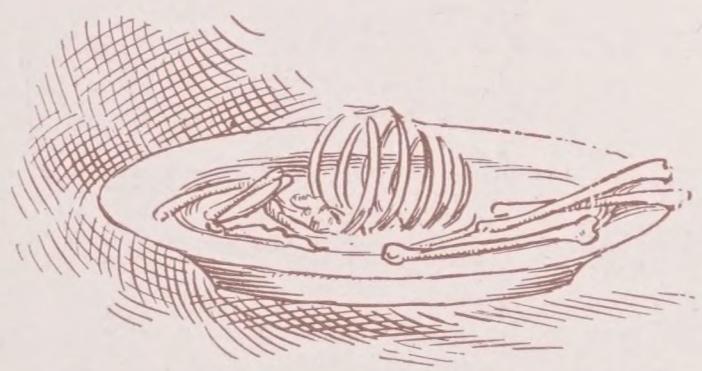
Jane laughed, and Philip's mother looked as if she wanted to; but she didn't. She lifted the turkey up on the table instead, and the last doubt as to its pedigree was done away with by a little note which she found tied under its wing, and which said:

"I am a wild turkey, and a native of North America. My plumage is very bright. I roost in trees, eat insects, seeds, young frogs, and corn, and am sometimes caught in traps. I am tired of life, and want to be eaten.

"Sincerely, T. GOBBLER."

Some people thought it wasn't quite nice in Philip's mother to ask the artist over to dinner; but I think it was, and so did the artist, for he went and took a bag of oranges with him. And so did the turkey; for if ever a turkey exerted itself to make a Christmas dinner a success, and poured out its soul in gravy, that turkey did.







It Worries Me

BENIGHTED bird,
Your voice is heard
Before the break of day!

Do you not see
It worries me,
To be disturbed this way?



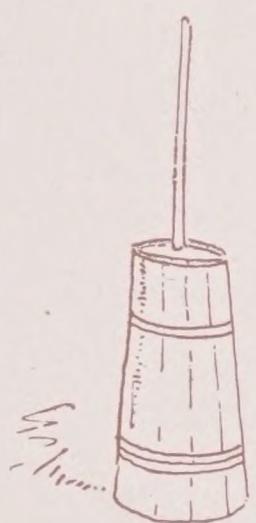
Grandfather's Glasses

O H, look in all the dresser-drawers,
And underneath them, too;
Grandfather's lost his glasses,
And doesn't know what to do!

And look behind the closet-door,
And on the parlor shelf;
“There! never mind,” grandfather says,
“I’ve found them now myself.”



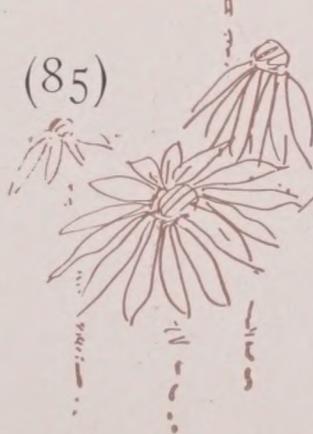


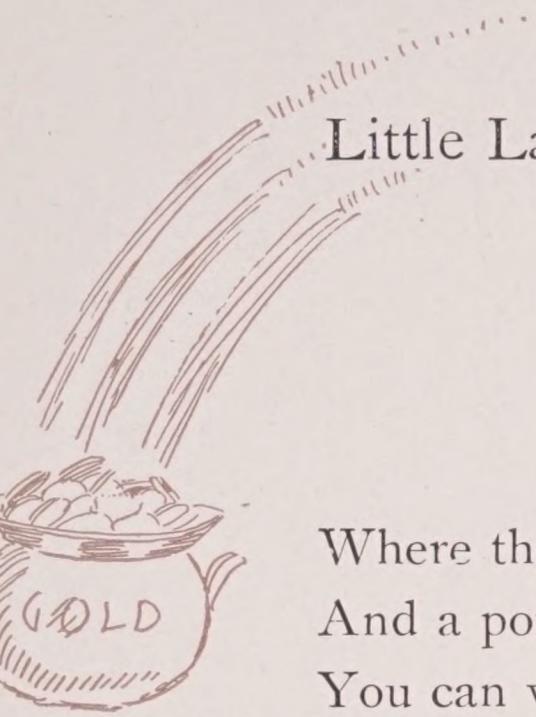




Little Lady, Come and Play

“LITTLE lady on the stile,
Come and play with me awhile.
Come with me across the meadows
Through the sunshine and the shadows—
Through the sunlight and the shade
Where the apple-blooms are made.
On a thistle-down we’ll go
Where the red-eyed daisies grow;





Little Lady, Come and Play

Where the rainbow meets the ground
And a pot of gold is found.
You can watch us paint it, too,
Green and yellow, red and blue.
Little lady, come and play !
You can churn the milky way;
You can see the fairy king
Threading dewdrops on a string;
I'm not sure you understand—
May be you can kiss his hand.
Wouldn't that be lots of fun?
Leave your milking, dear, and come.”



Little Lady, Come and Play

“Oh, I thank you, little fairy;
They will need me in the dairy,
Where I have to take a turn,
With my mother at the churn,
Making butter fresh and sweet,
For the minister to eat.”





Always Dinner Time

I

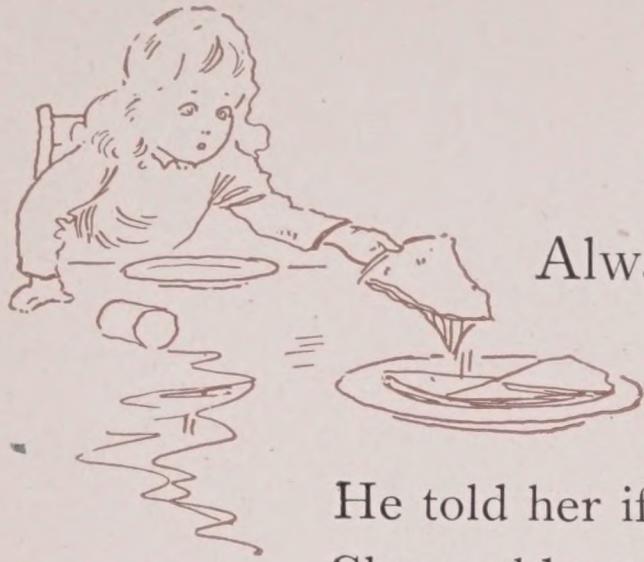
“IT’S dreadful,” she said, with a sigh,
“I’m so hungry I fear I shall die!
They don’t realize
That a girl of my size
Requires a great deal of pie.”

II

“What’s that?” she heard some one demand—
She never could quite understand;
Stare hard as she would
Before her there stood
A prince with a pie in his hand.

(88)





Always Dinner Time

III

He told her if she'd be his wife,
She could eat custard-pie with a knife;
And could help herself twice
To everything nice,
And do nothing but eat all her life.

IV

So they rode till they came to a gate
With this legend upon a brass plate:
“You should not put away
What you might eat to-day,”
And she ate and she ate and she ate.

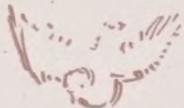
V

And she ate 'till she got like a ball,
And her eyes they got dreadfully small;



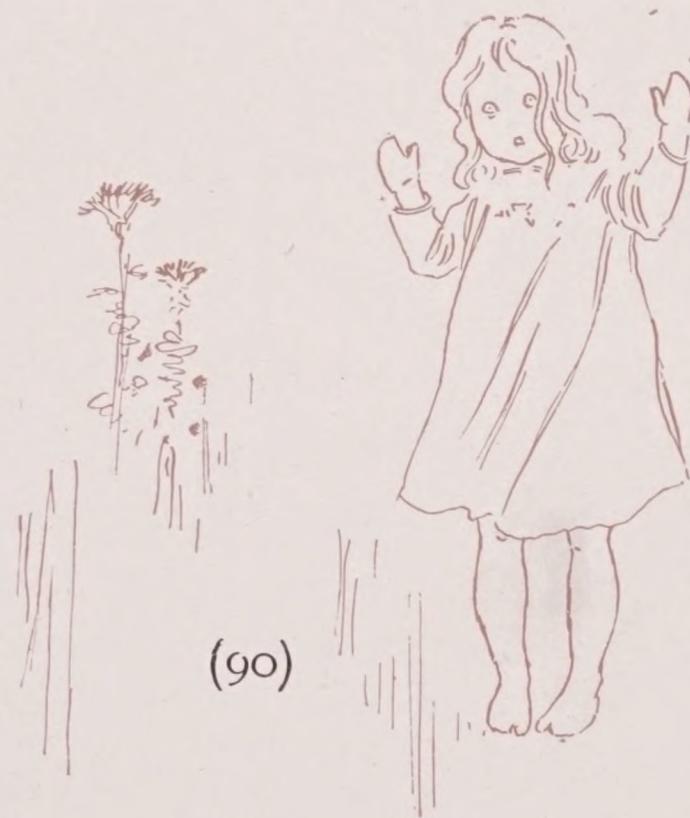
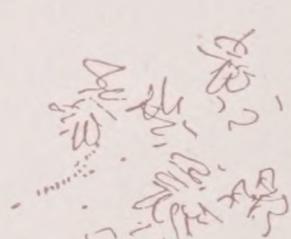
Always Dinner Time

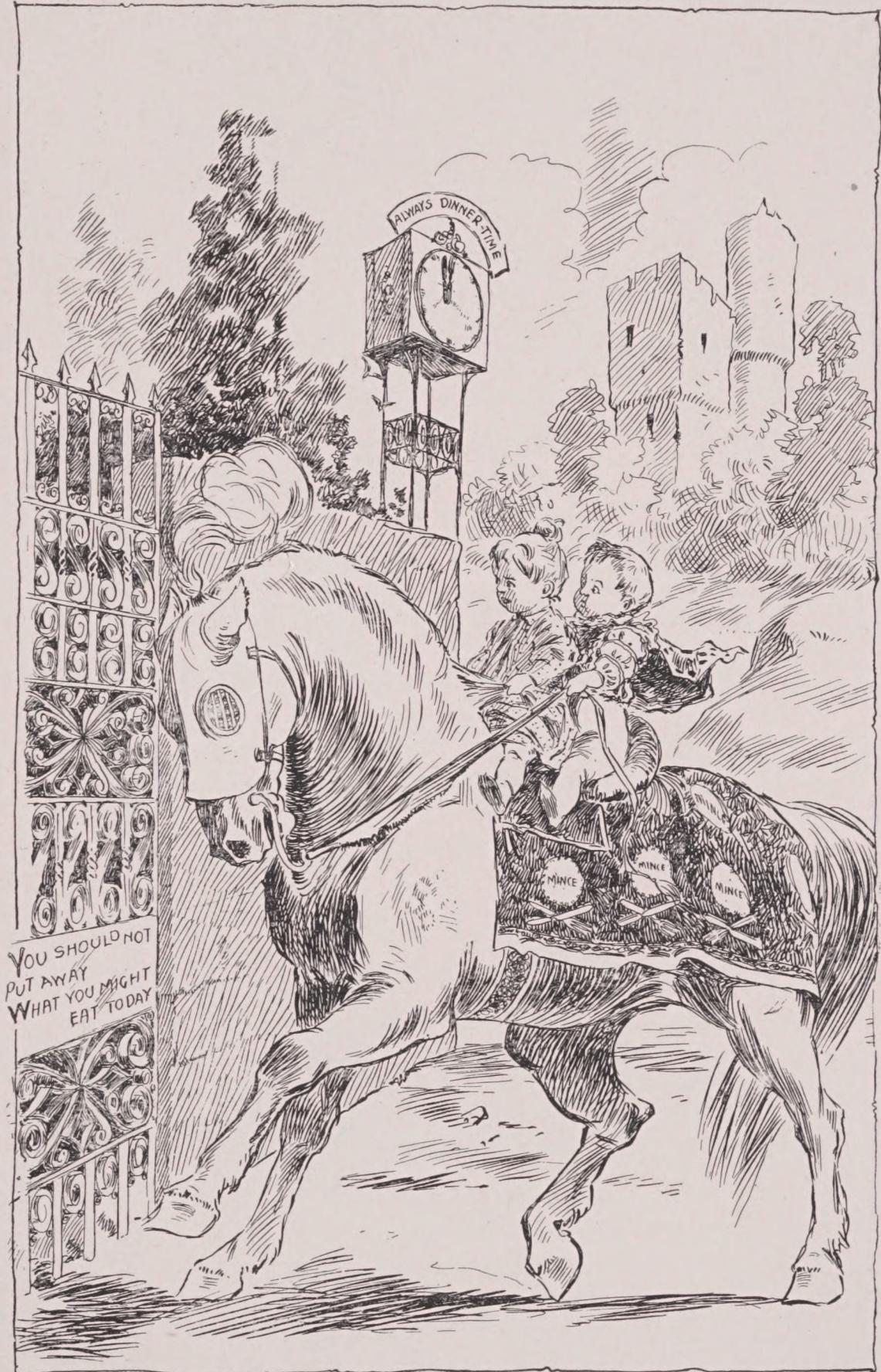
She grew out of her clothes,
And as for her nose—
She didn't have any at all.



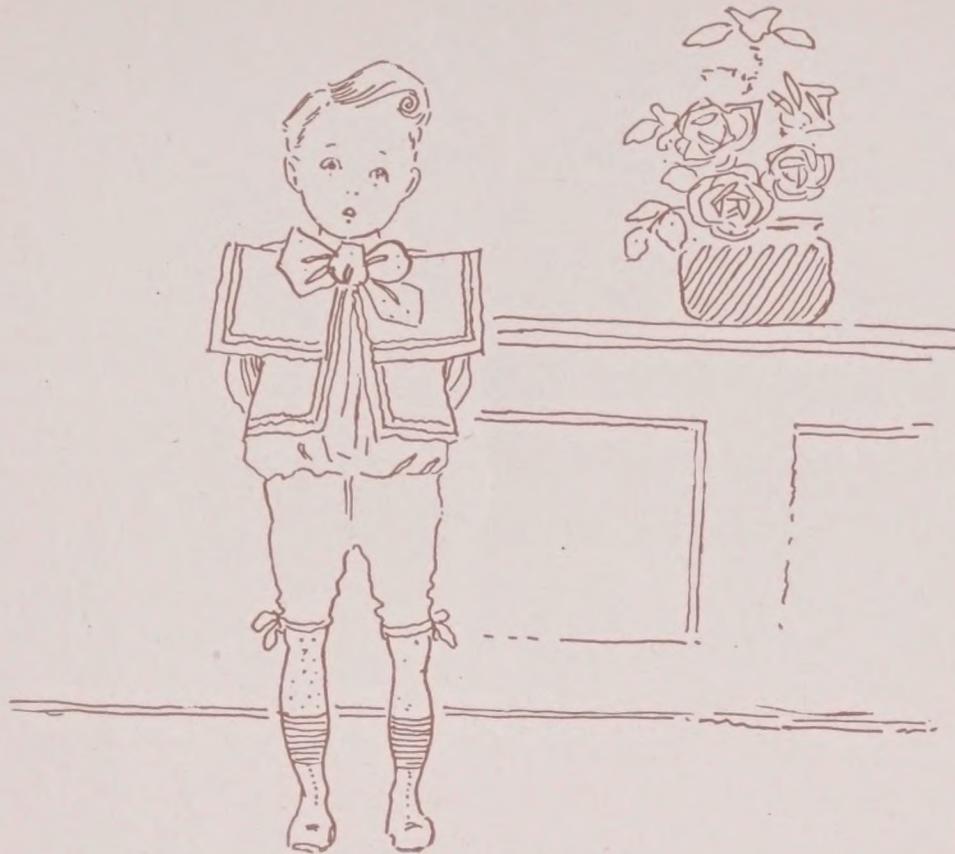
VI

She set out in this wonderful plight,
And arrived at her home after night.
And her father said, "Ben,
Here's the pig out again!"
Then she woke in a terrible fright.









Grandpa's Little Man

“GOODNESS, me! whose little man?
Give grandpa a kiss.
Please to tell us, Mary Ann,
What gentleman is this?”

Through the day the gentleman
Gets in many a scrape,
And comes home at supper time,
Sadly out of shape.

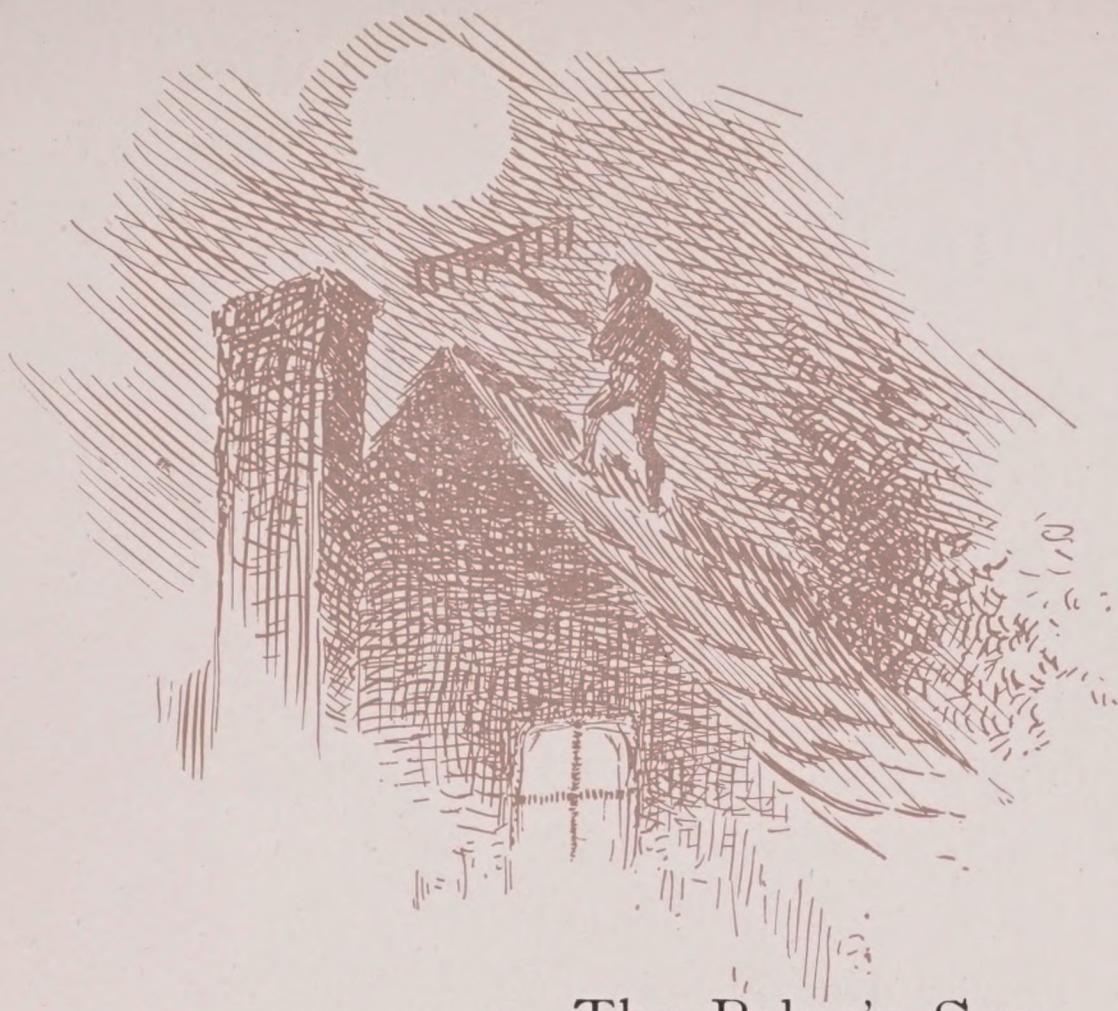
(93)



Grandpa's Little Man

“Gracious goodness! Mary Ann,
Where'd you get this tramp?
I don't know this beggar-man.
Take away the scamp!”





The Baker's Son

THE whole day long the baker's son
Did sit apart and mutter:
“I know the moon is made of cheese,
Or else a roll of butter.

I'll mount my father's roof to-night
And with my father's rake,
I'll jerk me off a little bite—
They won't miss what I take.”

(95)



The Baker's Son

The evening meal had just begun—
'Twas in the misty twilight—
When little John, the baker's son,
Came crashing through the skylight.

“O, mother, don't mind me,” he cried,
“I shall be better soon—
Have father gather up these stars
While you pick up the moon.”









L. of C.





How Annetta Was Cured

ANNETTA loved Tom very much; perhaps because nobody else had ever loved him, for he was an old cat, not at all pleasing to look at, and somewhat cross even to her.

He was black and white and yellow spotted; a little bit of his tail had been snipped off in the trap and he had lost part of one ear in a street fight; for he had an unpleasant disposition and was always getting himself into difficulties. Ever since he was a little kitten, he had been a source of great anxiety to his mother on account of the late hours and low company that he kept, and, at the tender age of six weeks, with a defiant toss of his little tail, he shook off all maternal restraint and became a tramp. His mother grieved pitifully over his loss. "Who would think," said the people she lived with, "that with five kittens left, she would miss one so much?" But the mother looked tenderly at the five that were left, and could not keep back her tears. "It's worse than if he had been drowned in his innocent kittyhood," she sighed to a neighbor cat who tried to console her; "for if he were drowned, I'd know that dogs and bad boys couldn't get him." As for Tom, for a long time he wandered about the streets picking up









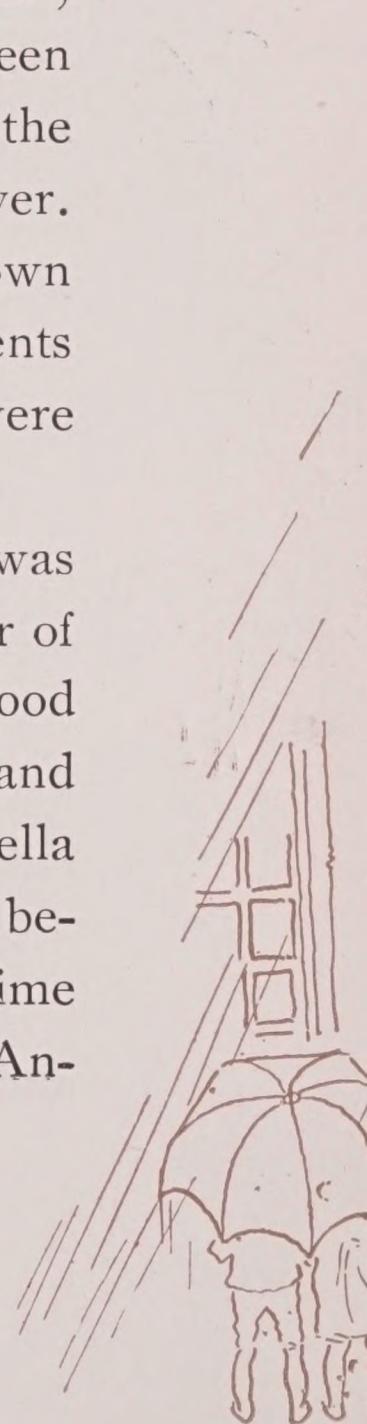
How Annetta Was Cured

105

what he could find to eat, and sleeping under culverts or in door-ways.

This was not a pleasant life to lead, for dogs chased him and boys threw stones at him, and he was often very tired and hungry. One gloomy evening he came out of an alley, and after looking about him for a little while, turned into a narrow side street. It had been raining hard all the afternoon, and now as the twilight came on it was more dismal than ever. Dirty drops of water chased each other down the dusty shop windows; little muddy torrents went surging along the gutters; and there were many puddles on the uneven sidewalk.

It had been a hard day for Tom. He was strolling along slowly, thinking of a number of things and keeping his eye out for a good opening for a mouser, when he met Jamie and Annetta. They had a very large umbrella over them, and a very little sack of cheese between them, out of which from time to time they each took a small bite; and when An-



netta saw the hungry old cat, she stooped down and laid a morsel of the cheese on the sidewalk before him. When he had eaten that, she gave him another piece, and as she seemed to be such a kind little girl, Tom decided to follow her home and live with her for a while.



This arrangement was very agreeable to Annetta, but Annetta's mother didn't enter into it with the enthusiasm that Tom could have wished. She said he was an ugly cat and had a wicked look out of his eye; and once when he was sleeping on the back steps, she swept him off with the broom. But Annetta overlooked all his faults and considered him the embodiment of feline perfection. She never forgot to put his meals on a little tin plate in the back yard; it was Annetta who smoothed his rough fur and picked the burrs out of his tail when he came in from a long tramp nobody knew where.

Tom was very sensible of this kindness, and laid many mice at the little girl's feet,







as tokens of his gratitude. And once he brought her a little dead bird. Then Annetta scolded him, and that afternoon she and Jamie buried the bird in the back yard with much funeral pomp, and they tied a black veil over Tom's head and made him march in the procession as chief mourner. After that he ate his birds away from home.

Tom had been staying at Annetta's for about two months, when one morning as Jamie was crawling through the fence to show his new overalls with straps across the back, almost like suspenders, Annetta's mother called to him and said:

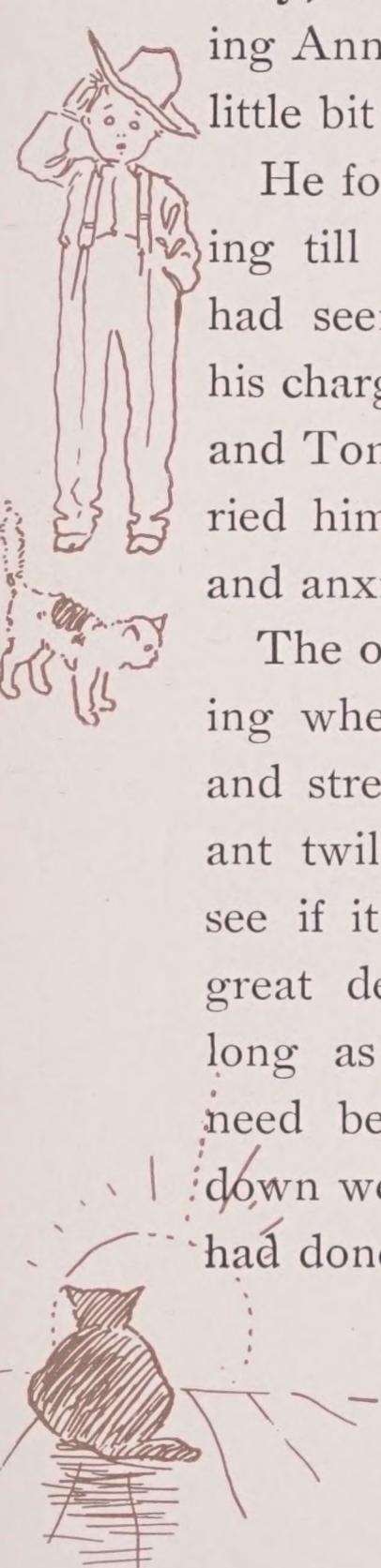
"Don't come over to-day, for we are afraid Annetta is taking the scarlet fever." By evening the news was confirmed, and a little yellow flag was hung out; and then Annetta's mother called across the fence again and said:

"Annetta wants to know if Jamie will take care of the cat while she is sick."

Now, this was not a pleasant task for the

110 How Annetta Was Cured

little boy, for he and Tom had never been the best of friends. He undertook it very cheerfully, however, for he was in the habit of obeying Annetta implicitly, and, after all, he was a little bit proud of the trust.



He followed the old cat around from morning till night. He arranged his meals as he had seen Annetta do. He was not happy if his charge was out of his sight for a moment, and Tom's reckless habits and wild ways worried him so that his little face took on a worn and anxious look.

The only real peace he got was in the evening when he had seen Tom eat his supper and stretch himself out to sleep in the pleasant twilight; then, after feeling his nose to see if it was cool (for Annetta, who knew a great deal about cats, had told him that as long as a cat's nose was cold no anxiety need be felt about his health) he would sit down wearily on the back steps, feeling that he had done his duty for that day, and could give





a good report to Annetta; for every morning Annetta would print in very large letters on her slate, How is T, To-DAY? and her mother would hang it up in the window. And Jamie would print a very abbreviated list of Tom's doings for the day on his slate and hang it in his window, and in this way they kept each other posted.

Annetta had been ill about a week, when one evening after he had his supper and had his nose felt to the satisfaction of Jamie, Tom disappeared through a hole in the back fence in company with a disreputable looking white cat who lived with an old lady in the next square. All that night he didn't return, and when Jamie got up in the morning, he found the cat's little box with a piece of old comfort in it, cold and empty.

The little boy climbed upon the back fence and looked this way and that. At last, he was relieved to see the old cat coming slowly down the alley. He crawled through the fence feebly and lay



down in the shade as though he were very tired. Then he got up and ran around and around, and jumped over an old chair and yowled, and bristled out his tail. Jamie was running after him trying to catch him, when his mother came hurrying out of the kitchen and cried:

"Come into the house, Jamie, I am afraid the poor cat has a fit."

The little boy stopped short and leaned against the fence. It seemed too dreadful to be true! What would Annetta say, and how could he answer her anxious inquiries about her pet? But that morning no slate appeared in Annetta's window, and the little girl would not have known her old cat if he had jumped upon her bed. He might have laid any number of choice mice at her feet and received no caressing pat from her little hot hands.

Jamie wandered disconsolately about the yard, trying to think of some way out of his difficulties. He wished Annetta were there to advise





him; but one thing was sure, Tom had been entrusted to his especial care and must be cured. So that afternoon he tied a string about the cat's neck and led him out into the street. As they passed by the house where the owner of the rabbit lived, they saw him sitting on his steps with his chin buried in his hands. He spoke to Jamie very kindly:

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"I am taking Tom to a doctor," Jamie replied promptly. "He has had a fit."

The owner of the rabbit was interested at once. He came down to the fence and looked at the invalid.

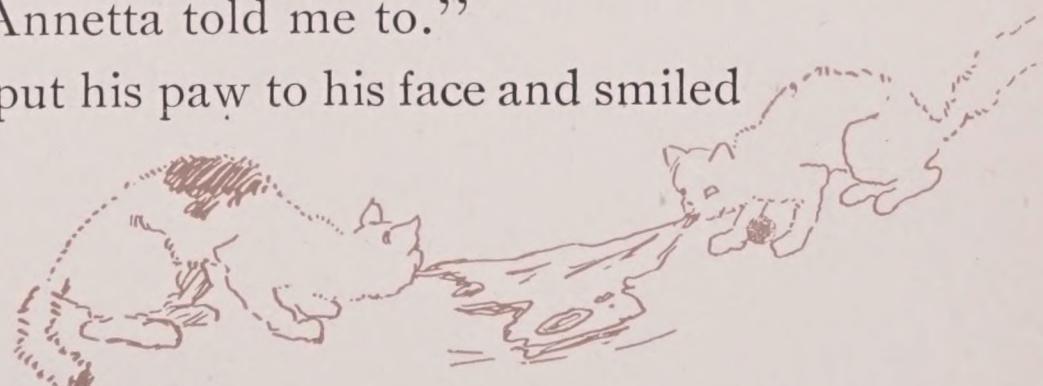
"What made him have it?" he said.

James shook his head.

"Maybe he went and ate a lot of raw beef steak," suggested the boy.

"No he didn't," said Jamie decidedly, "for I have only been feeding him scraps and things, just the way Annetta told me to."

Here Tom put his paw to his face and smiled



118 How Annetta Was Cured

for he knew very well that he and the white cat had stolen a large steak from the old lady, and eaten it all the very night before.

"Do you know what would be good for him?" Jamie went on in an anxious tone.

The boy made a hasty mental review of his list of remedies; after thinking deeply for a while he asked:

"Have you tried burying a pin?"

"A what?" said Jamie, and even Tom raised the hair on his back, for he thought it possible that the pin was to be buried in him. He was much relieved to hear that it was only to be put under the ground at a cross-road.

"It's good for warts," the boy continued, "but I don't know whether it will do him any good or not. If a cat's fitty, there ain't anything much you can do for him, anyhow. And that cat looks 's if he might be."

Jamie's heart sank as he hurried Tom away. He knew exactly where he was going, for once when he and Annetta had gone down town to

see a parade, they had stopped to rest in a doorway, where Annetta had said there lived a great doctor, who cured thousands of people every day, she guessed; and as she seemed to have such a high opinion of his ability, Jamie had at once decided that this practitioner should try his skill upon Tom.

He found the place without much difficulty. The stone steps to the office felt very hot to his little bare feet, as he trudged sturdily up them with the cat in his arms.

With a beating heart he went into the waiting-room and sat down in a leather covered chair, with Tom on his lap. How many people there were, coming and going all the time! Jamie wondered if they were all sick, and if any of them had the scarlet fever. There were no other cats there, but surely a doctor who could cure a person could cure a cat.

For a long time he sat there, and the sunshine grew more and more slanting as it streamed through the window and made little dancing



patterns on the floor. By and by the people went away, and then a door opened and the doctor himself came out. He was an old man with a high shining hat. There were so many charms upon his watch chain that they jingled when he walked. He carried a little brass bound medicine case under his arm, and was putting on his gloves as he came. When he saw the little boy he stopped and looked down at him.

"Are you lost?" he said, "or are you waiting for someone?"

"No, sir," Jamie replied, swallowing a lump in his throat. "I've come to get some medicine for Tom, he has had a fit. He is ran 'round and 'round and nobody could ketch him."

There was a typewriter girl in the office who, when he held up the cat, put her handkerchief to her mouth and left the room.

"She needn't be afraid," said the little boy, contemptuously, "they ain't ketchin'. Me and



Annetta 've played with Tom for weeks and weeks, and we ain't ever had any."

"How many has your cat had?" asked the the old man.

"He isn't my cat," Jamie explained, "he is Annetta's cat, and I am taking care of him until she gets well. She is the little girl that lives beside of me and she is awful sick. I 'spect she's goin' to die. She has got the scarlet fever, and is ist as speckled all over," and Jamie waved his arms to show how completely the dire disease had laid hold of Annetta. The doctor looked into the little boy's anxious face for a moment, and a queer look came over his own kind face as he turned quickly and went into his private office. Presently he returned with some powders done into a neat little parcel.

"You're to give him one of these," he said, "if he shows any signs of being sick again. Let him drink all the milk he wants, and I think your cat will be all right."

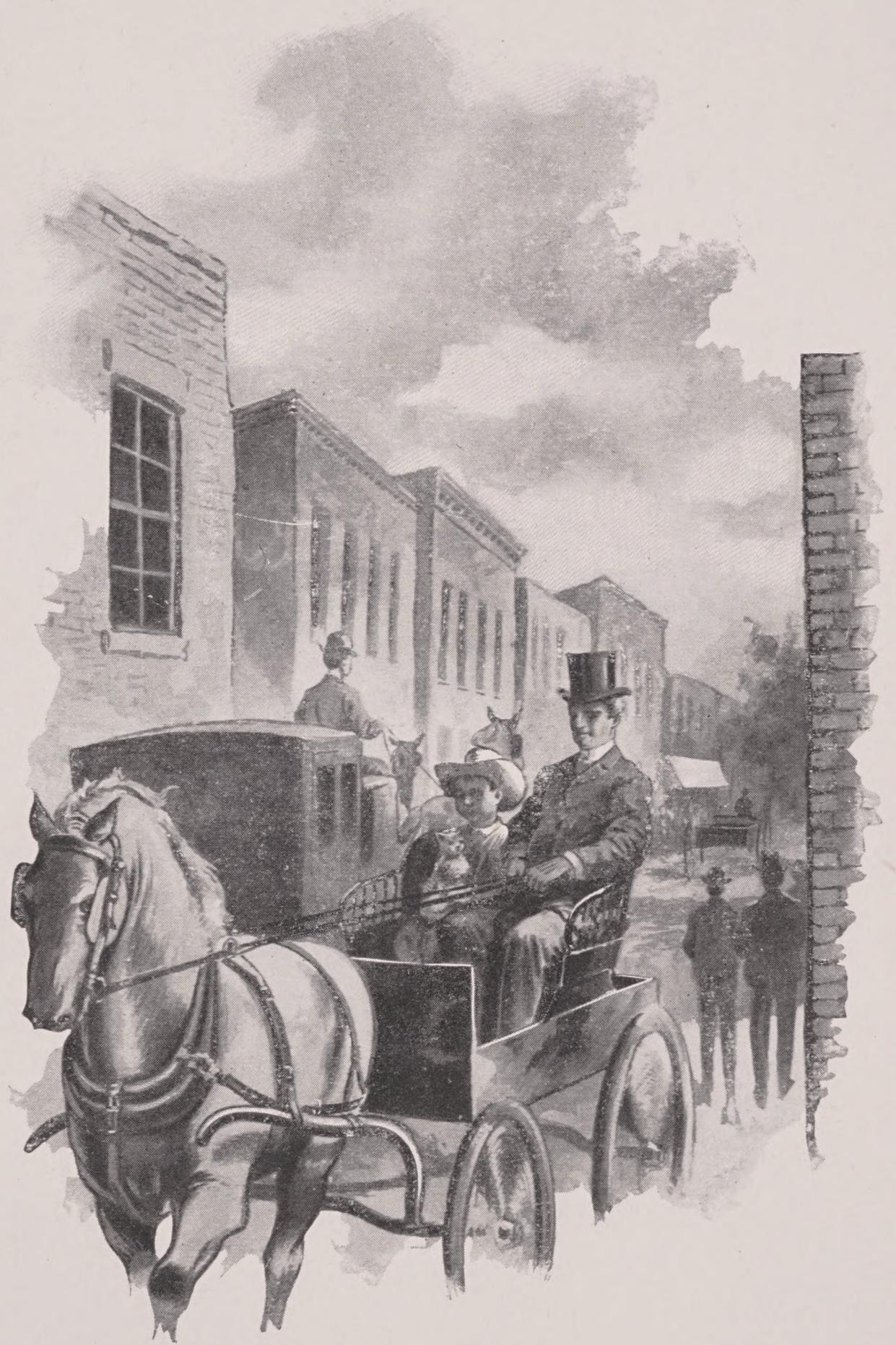


Jamie took the powders in his hand, and worked himself down off the chair. "I haven't any money to pay you for this now," he said, "for me and Annetta spent all our money for a rabbit, but I shall have a quarter Christmas, and I will bring you that. Annetta will have a quarter, too, and I 'spect I could get that for you too."

"I usually do a cash business," said the old gentleman, stroking his chin, "but under the circumstances we will let it go. It's always a good thing to have money coming in at Christmas time. Wait," he called, as the little boy started out the door, "I'm going to drive home, and if you will show me where you live, I will put you out there."

Jamie could hardly believe that he heard aright, and it was not until he and his cat had been lifted into the doctor's rubber-tired road-cart that he gave himself up to the pleasure of the situation. He leaned far back in the cushioned seat, with his little feet straight out in





front of him. And all the way he kept his hand on Tom's nose, lest the excitement should recall the trouble of the morning. And what a ride that was! How skilfully the old man guided his high stepping horse through the crowded streets, going just close enough to other vehicles to make things exciting, but not close enough to cause any accidents.

Jamie hoped that the owner of the rabbit might be in a position to see his triumph, and the effect produced upon this young man came up to his highest expectations. It was getting dark now, and the lights were beginning to wink in all the shop windows; as they turned into the little street where Jamie lived, he saw his mother walking anxiously up and down the sidewalk. At last Jamie was helped out, still grasping the precious medicine in his little sweaty fist.

"And now," said the doctor briskly, "where does the little girl live?" But before Jamie had time to answer, he had caught sight

of the yellow flag, and was taking himself, his high hat and his little brass-bound medicine case straight up the path, and was knocking at Annetta's door.



When Annetta's mother opened the door, he went in and closed it very softly behind him. If the neighbors in that little street were surprised to see the great doctor's turnout before Annetta's house, they had to get over it, for it appeared there again and again; and at last the hateful flag was taken down, and there came the joyful news that Annetta was very much better, and would soon be able to resume her work out in the bakery, which she meant to enlarge and carry on in a finer style than ever.

Then, one happy day, Jamie's mother told him if he would be very good, he might go over in the morning to see Annetta. He and Tom were up very early that morning. The little boy smoothed the cat's rough fur and fastened a bow of green tissue paper around



How Annetta Was Cured

129

his neck, so that he might look very smart and well cared for.

Then he polished up a piece of blue glass he had found in the alley and wrapped it in a little piece of newspaper. This gem he meant to present to Annetta to look at the sun through, and when all was finished he sat down and folded his little hands in quiet joy until the time should come to go. When at last it did come, he found Annetta sitting in her rocking chair beside the window. She thanked him for his present, and greeted him very kindly, but in a lofty and dignified manner befitting a little girl who has just recovered from the scarlet fever; and while he was standing before her, feeling a little bit strange and awkward, the kitchen door opened and Annetta's mother came in.

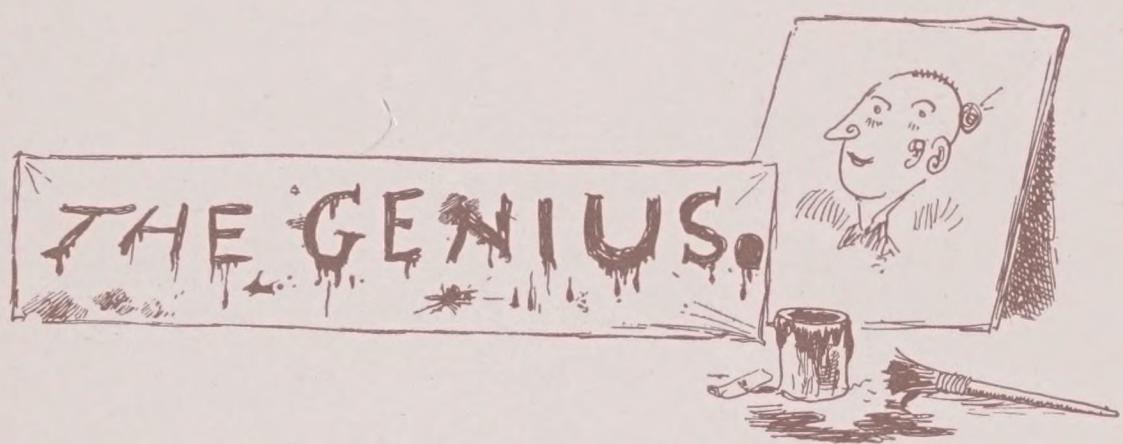
She had been busy washing, for she had her sleeves rolled up, and was wiping her hands on her apron. She didn't say a word but just knelt down and took the little boy and the big cat in



130 How Annetta Was Cured

her arms, and kissed Jamie a great many times; yes, and she kissed Tom, too, and looked so funny, that for a moment Jamie thought she was going to cry; on reflection he decided that this was a mistake, for you know there was nothing to cry about, now, here Annetta was cured; and Tom, I have heard, has been perfectly well from that day to this.





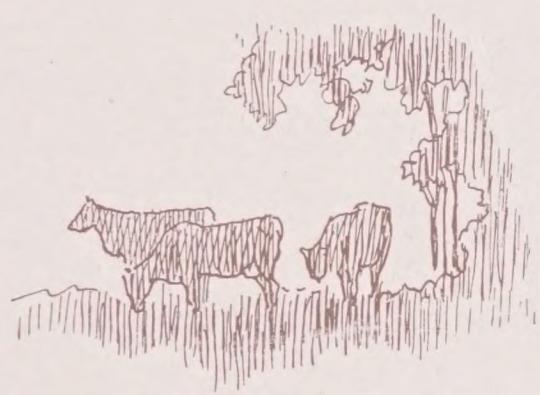


The Genius

"MY drawing may be out of line;
But then that idea of mine,
Of transposing the nose,
So that all the face shows,
I think is exceedingly fine."







Mother's Little Man

DOWN across the meadows,
Through the crimson foam
Of the clover blossoms,
They are coming home.

On the hill the cattle
Purple shadows throw
Down to little Herbert
In the vale below.

Mounted on old Dolly,
Sturdy legs astride,—
Never did a charger
Bear such weight of pride.

At the door his mother
Says: "Well! I declare,
Where's the man like Herbert,
Any, any where!"





The Oak Tree's Secret

IN a certain forest there grew an Oak Tree.

He was so very large and tall that his head towered high above the tops of all the other trees, and he could look down upon the surrounding country and see the hills and valleys spread out before him like a picture. He could see the people working in their fields, and the patient horses going wearily up and down, dragging the plows after them, and sometimes, on pleasant summer afternoons, he could look far away into the purple distance, to where the tops of other forest trees were tossing and shining in the sunlight.

Everything that grew in the woods loved the great Oak, because he was so dignified and strong. They held him in much respect, also, on account of his great age, and



138 The Oak Tree's Secret

asked his opinion upon all matters of importance. If a little sprout fell ill, the anxious mother tree hurried to him for counsel, and many a crooked young sapling had turned over a new leaf, and grown into a straight and upright tree, all on account of the old Oak's good advice.

Then, too, he was an interesting talker, and afforded his friends much entertainment; for when night drew on and the village people were locked safely in their houses, and the moon was sailing high above the waving branches, then all the little creatures in the woods came out and sat in a pleasant circle about the roots of the great tree and warmed their little feet in a ray of moonlight and listened, while he told them marvelous stories of things that had happened years and years ago.

Of Indians who came marching through the forest paths with their painted faces and their bows and arrows, and of robbers who had crept stealthily under his dark branches and counted



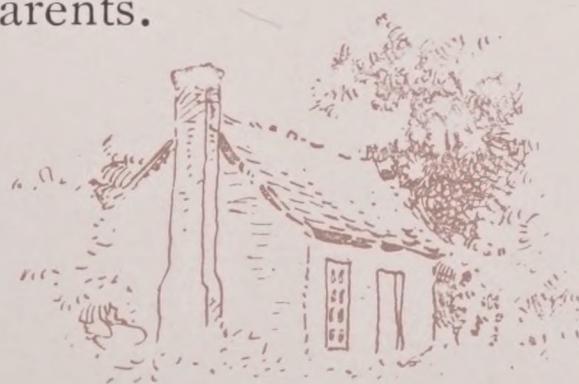




their store and treasure there. But, however reminiscent he grew, there was one story the Oak Tree never told, for that was his own secret and he kept and guarded it safely, folding it closer and closer in his staunch old heart, until the children found it out.

Perhaps the ants had some suspicion of it, as they ran busily up and down the bark, carrying their little bundles, or maybe the wind guessed it as he went roaming about among the leaves, but it is quite certain the Oak Tree never mentioned it. Of course, the squirrels knew all about it, for they lived in the hollow trunk of the tree; but then he knew he could trust them, for they had always been the best of friends. In fact it was an ancestor of the present inhabitant who had planted the acorn from which the Oak grew.

Now on the edge of the village there stood a very little house, and that was where Herbert and Elsie had come to live with their grandparents.





The Grandfather was a very old man. His hair was white and his face was brown and wrinkled, and all day long he sat bending over his bench, making and mending shoes for the village people. He was very poor, too; that is, he had no money and had to work hard for his living—but the sun was bright that shone in at the little shop window, and when it rained Elsie found fine material for mud-pies in a ditch directly in front of the Grandfather's house, and the children's faces grew round and bright as they played up and down the road and under the forest trees.

They soon grew to be great friends of the Oak Tree, and he became very fond of them and watched for their coming, for every afternoon when the weather was fine they came to play under his branches.

Sometimes they would make swings there and sometimes the little girl, who was learning to sew, would bring her work; then the old tree would look down at her quite proudly



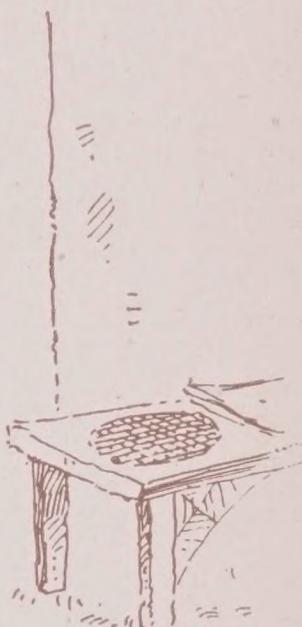




while she took very long stitches and very small bits of calico,—for she was piecing a quilt. And so the summer went by. It was a day in the early fall and it had been raining so hard that the children could not play under the trees, but had to stay in the shop and keep their Grandfather company. As it grew dark the Grandfather was bending close over his work, and the children sitting on two little stools were watching him, when suddenly the awl slipped and the point went directly into the old man's hand.

Now that was the beginning of very hard times at the shoemaker's little house. The work-bench had to be pushed back against the wall and for many days the old man sat idly beside the window with his bandaged hand in a sling.

Sometimes he would go into the woods with the children; then he would sit with his back leaning against the Oak Tree and watch the children while they played.



The Oak Tree looked down at him, and felt very sorry for him, for he knew the Grandfather was in trouble.

One morning as they were returning home they saw a strange man leaning over the fence and looking at the little house as though he had some special interest in it.

"Who is that man?" asked the little boy.

"Never mind," answered the Grandfather nervously; "you children go on into the house. I'll be along directly."

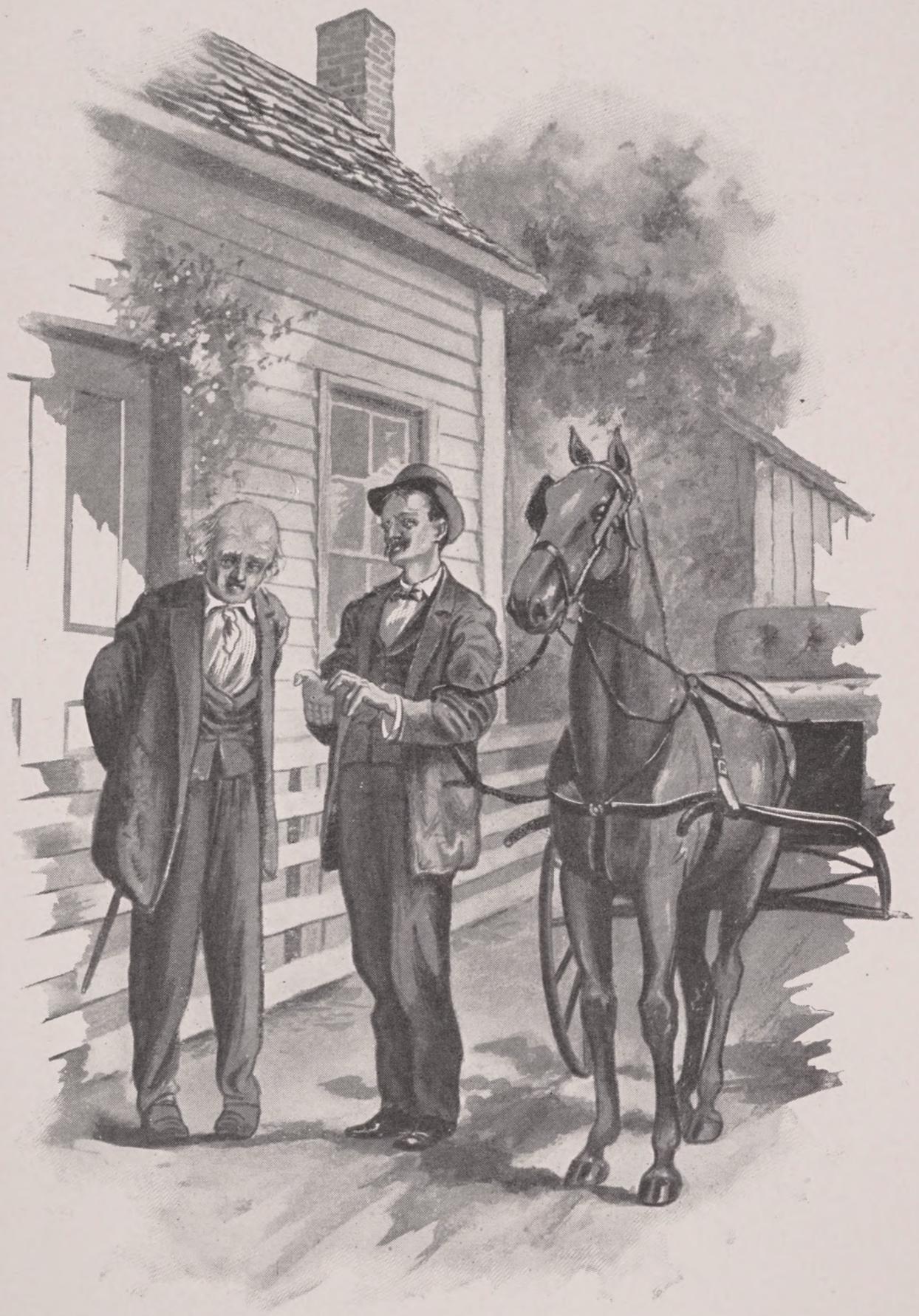
But the children did not go so far but they overheard the conversation.

"I've come about the mortgage," said the stranger, turning shortly upon the little Grandfather.

"Yes, I know," the old man answered. "I had hoped you would wait on me a little while longer. You see I've had bad luck. I had expected to pay some on it before this."

"That's the way," said the man harshly. "You people are always expecting to do things,







but you never do them. We can't afford to let things go on this way forever. We'll give you another week. If you can't raise the mortgage off the house, we'll have to sell it." Then he jumped into his buggy and drove away.

"What is a mortgage, any way?" whispered the little girl as they went into the house.

"I don't know," said the little boy. "It must be something like an umbrella; he said we'd have to raise it."

"Grandfather," said Elsie that day at dinner, "if Herbert and I had that long ladder of Williams's, we could get up and take that thing off the house,—your hand's so sore."

"Never mind," said the Grandmother cheerfully. "It's a kind of debt and it takes money to get that off the house, but it will all come right somehow. You children go and play and be happy." Then she tied the little girl's sunbonnet carefully under her chin, patted the little boy on the back and started them off.

But somehow they could not play that after-



noon; the responsibilities of the household lay too heavily on them, and they sat so very still under the Oak Tree he thought they must have gone to sleep, so he dropped an acorn down to wake them up.

"Elsie," said Herbert suddenly turning round, "how much does it take to get that off the house?"

"I don't know," said the little girl shaking her head, "but it takes a lot of money."

"Well, whatever it is," said Herbert, with a determined air, "we've got to make it."

Elsie put her small elbows on her knees and looked out of her sunbonnet to argue the point.

"How are we going to do it?" she said.

"Sell things," answered the little boy, confidently; "rags and bones."

This seemed to Elsie a very good plan, for if there was any profit in bones they surely needn't lack for money. They sat under the tree until very late, talking of their scheme with much enthusiasm.







It was several days before they came to play again under the Oak Tree, and he felt very lonely without them. He could see them from time to time, however, moving about their own yard, and up and down the road, with their gaze bent intently on the ground, stooping now and then to pick up a fine bone, which they carried away and hid in a certain fence corner.

Then, early one morning, he saw them start out in the direction of the village. Their search had evidently been quite successful, for they had a very large sack with them. It was a heavy sack, too, and as they dragged it along the dusty road their backs were bent double.

By and by he saw them returning. They had disposed of their wares and now came walking erect and briskly. They did not go on into the house, but climbed the fence and came directly to the Oak Tree.

“Now,” said the little girl, indicating a certain spot with her bare toe, “we’ll bury it here. This will be the safest place, and when the



week is up we'll dig it up and give it to Grandmother. Won't she be s'prised?"



Then when they had dug a little hole in the ground with a sharp stick, Elsie carefully untied her handkerchief and poured in a miscellaneous collection of copper coins, which they covered up very smoothly.

After that, for several afternoons, they came and sat over their treasure in silent joy. At last one day, as they were leaving, the little girl looked up into the Oak Tree and said: "You take good care of our money to-night, for in the morning we are coming to dig it up."

Then when they went away—such very little children they were—the old tree had to bend down even its very lowest branch in order to pat them on the head as they passed under it.

That night the queerest thing happened in the forest. The trees talk about it to this day, and wonder at it. When the little creatures came out and begged the old tree for a story, as usual, he seemed to be preoccupied and com-

plained of a slight pain in one of his limbs; and later on he called the squirrel up and they talked together for some time. Then the squirrel went running back and wakened up his wife.

"We'll have to be moving out," he said, in an agitated voice.

"Why, what's the matter?" said the mother squirrel, sitting up in bed so that her night-capped head cast a queer shadow on the walls of the old tree. But when her husband leaned over and whispered something in her ear, she got up with the greatest alacrity and hurried the children out into the air. It was none too soon either, for the little ones were still standing around rubbing their eyes sleepily, when suddenly the old Oak Tree began to toss and sway about in the most surprising manner.

To be sure, the wind had risen and black clouds were being blown about the sky, but surely the storm was not sufficient to agitate the great tree so.

"What can be the matter with the Oak?"



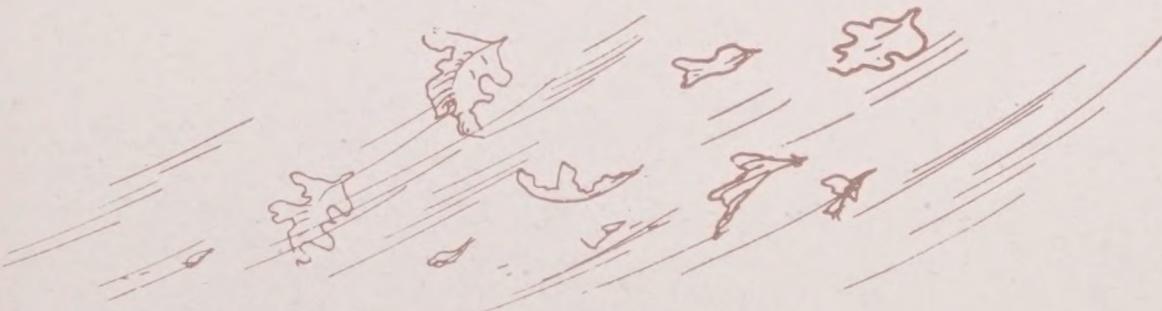
said all the other trees. "See how he's being blown about."

"He must be ill," said a kind little catnip bush. "I'd make him a cup of strengthening tea if I thought it would help him."

"Perhaps if he would put a slippery-elm poultice on his back, it would do him good," suggested a stately elm tree.

"I don't know whether it would fit his case or not," said a wild-cherry tree, "but you do make excellent poultices. When my son here"—and she laid her branch fondly upon a sapling growing near—"was very young, he had such a severe knot on one of his limbs we were afraid it was going to bring on a growth of lichen, but one of your poultices cured him in a remarkably short time."

But all these suggestions did not help the Oak Tree. As the wind blew harder he shook and trembled so, the ants went skurrying away from his roots to find a place of safety. Suddenly he threw his head high up into the air and took



a last look about him. Far down the road he could see the dim outline of the shoemaker's little house. A tiny light shone in one of the windows and he knew the children were sleeping there.

Then there was another gust of wind and a roll of thunder. Before it had died away, there came such a sharp, cracking sound that all the trees threw up their branches in alarm. The very next moment the Oak Tree, that had out-lived so many storms, broke short off near its roots and fell heavily to the ground.

It was very early in the morning when the children crept softly from the house and took their way into the woods. The trees had scarcely settled down after the excitement of the night before, and the leaves were still whispering about it among themselves. The birds were telling each other sharp, quick good-mornings from the branches, and the rising sun was just beginning to send long slanting beams between the trunks of the trees. The children



looked about at first a little bit apprehensively, then they took each other's hands and started along the well known path. All at once the little boy stopped short.

"Oh! Look, Elsie, the Oak Tree! it's blown down!"

"Right over our money, too," cried the little girl. "How'll we ever get it?"

Then they ran on again, scrambling over slippery logs and through the wet weeds. They went right up to the fallen tree, but their united strength could not move it, and the little boy was leaning dejectedly against it, when suddenly he gave a little cry and reached down into the hollow stump, for there it was he found it—"The Oak Tree's Secret." Who had put it there, or how long it had been there, nobody ever knew. But far down in the heart of the old tree it lay, almost hidden among the dry leaves—a little pile of gold; bright, shining, yellow gold.

Then Elsie held her little apron with trem-







bling hands, and Herbert poured the money into it, and they both went running home so fast that the trees looked after them in astonishment and wondered what made them hurry so. Breathless, they burst into the house and threw the treasure into the bewildered Grandmother's lap.

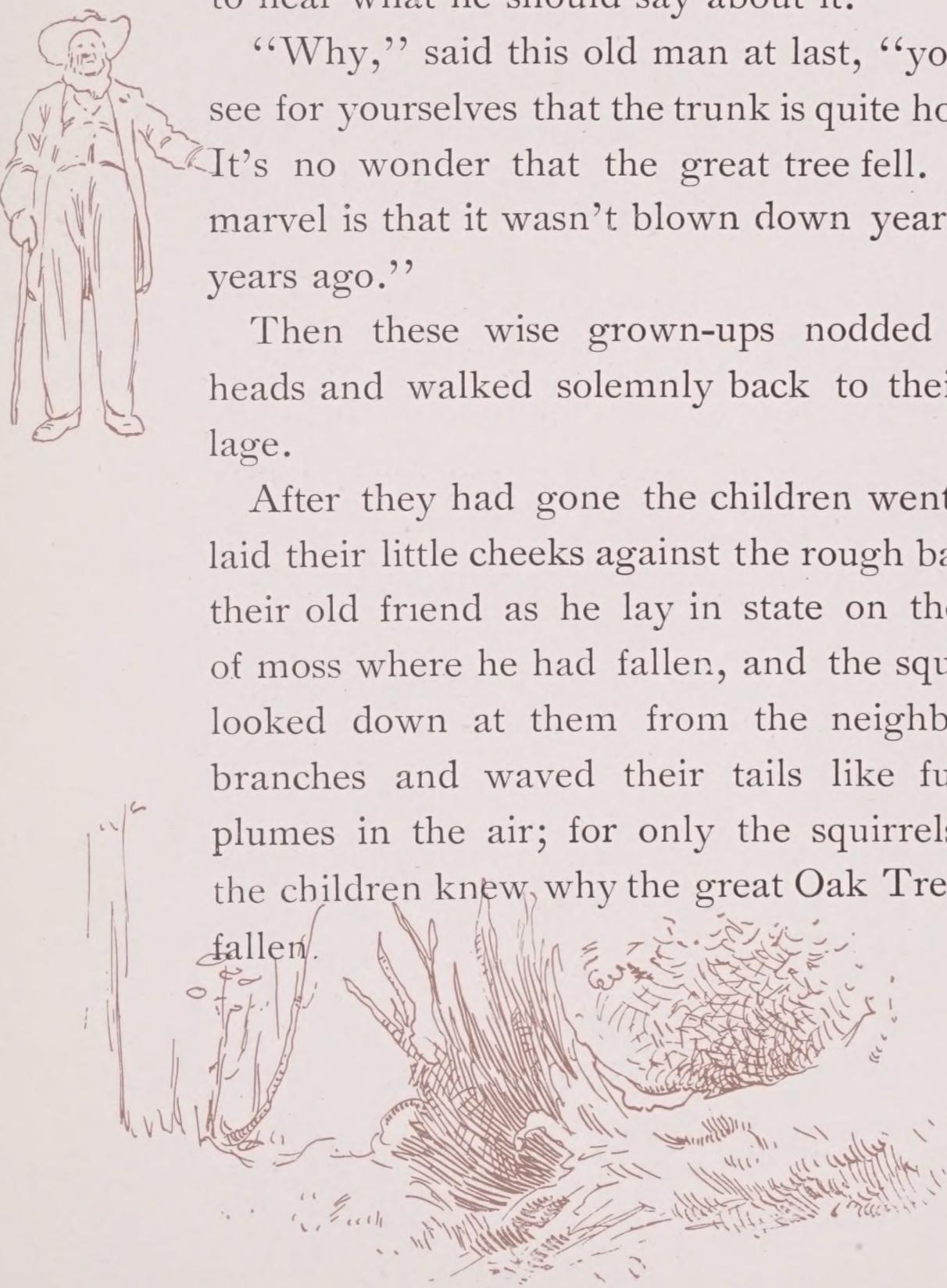
"See what we found in the Oak Tree!" they cried. Then while the old people held up their hands in amazement, the children told them all about it; and when they finished, tears of joy were trickling down the Grandfather's wrinkled cheeks, and the Grandmother gathered the little boy and girl up in her arms.

"I told you it would all come out right somehow," she said.

When the news went out through the village that the great tree had blown down, the people could hardly believe it, so they left their horses standing in fields and went to see if it were true. There was one very old man among them. He had a long gray beard, and had read so



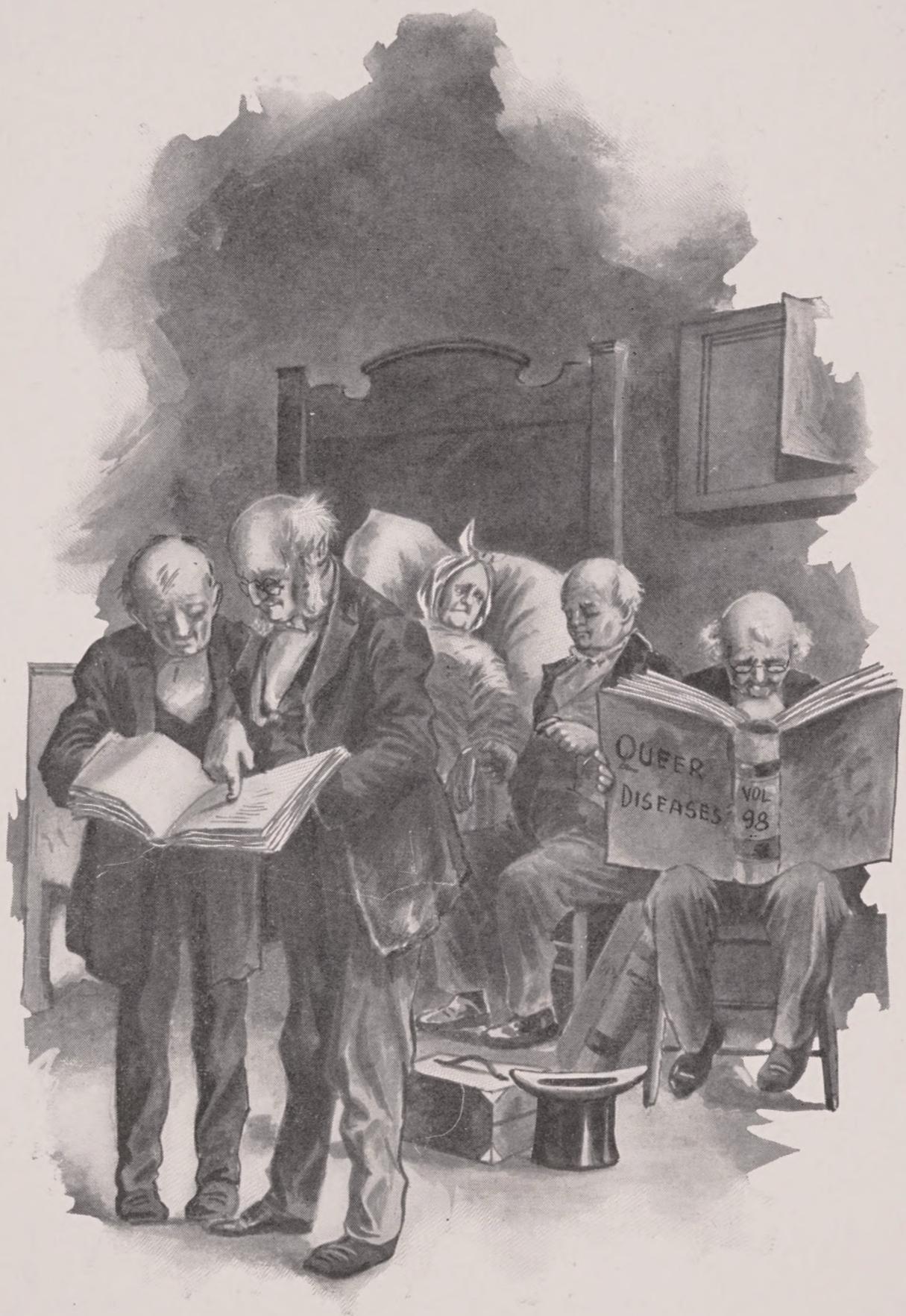
many books he knew all about trees, so they stood around in respectful silence and waited to hear what he should say about it.



“Why,” said this old man at last, “you can see for yourselves that the trunk is quite hollow. It’s no wonder that the great tree fell. The marvel is that it wasn’t blown down years and years ago.”

Then these wise grown-ups nodded their heads and walked solemnly back to their village.

After they had gone the children went and laid their little cheeks against the rough bark of their old friend as he lay in state on the bed of moss where he had fallen, and the squirrels looked down at them from the neighboring branches and waved their tails like funeral plumes in the air; for only the squirrels and the children knew why the great Oak Tree had fallen.





The Provident Old Man

THERE was an old man maintained
That prevention was better than cure;
So he took an assortment of pills
His continued good health to insure.

Next day he lay down on his bed,
And became so exceedingly ill
That the doctors who treated him said
His disease baffled medical skill.



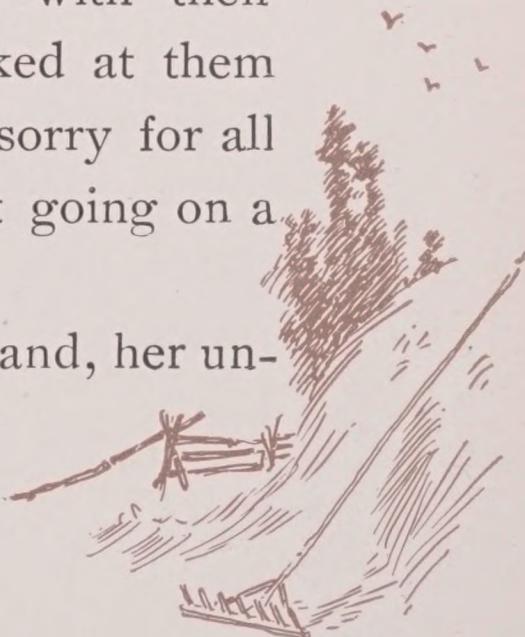
The Reformation
of Biddy.



Reformation of Biddy

ONE day a little girl went walking down street. Her hair was done in two small shining braids, she had on such a very stiff gingham apron that it crackled as she walked, and from the erect way in which she carried herself you might have known that something of great importance was on her mind; and so there was, for the little girl was Annetta, and that morning her uncle was coming after her, and she was going to stay for a week with her grandmother. She saw a number of other children playing about as usual, with their every-day clothes on, and she looked at them compassionately, for she felt very sorry for all little girls and boys who were not going on a visit that day.

When she returned from her errand, her un-



cle was already waiting for her with his horse and buggy, and he lifted her carefully upon the seat beside him ; then he lifted Jamie up too, for he was going to ride with them as far as the corner.

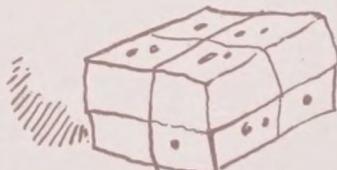


“And now, Annetta,” said her mother, as she kissed the little girl good-bye, “don’t you go and bring home any cats or dogs, for I won’t have them about the house.”

“No, ma’m, I won’t,” said Annetta dutifully.

That seemed a very long week to Jamie; but another Saturday morning rolled around at last, and with it came Annetta. After her uncle had set her down on the ground, he handed out a shoe box from the seat beside him, which she took very carefully. It had holes punched in the top, and queer little pecking sounds came from it. Then Annetta’s mother held up her hands in horror.

“I thought I told you,” she said, “not to bring any kittens or puppies with you.”



"Well, I didn't," said Annetta stoutly.
"This isn't a kitten or puppy, it's a chicken."
And so it was, a little downy chicken.

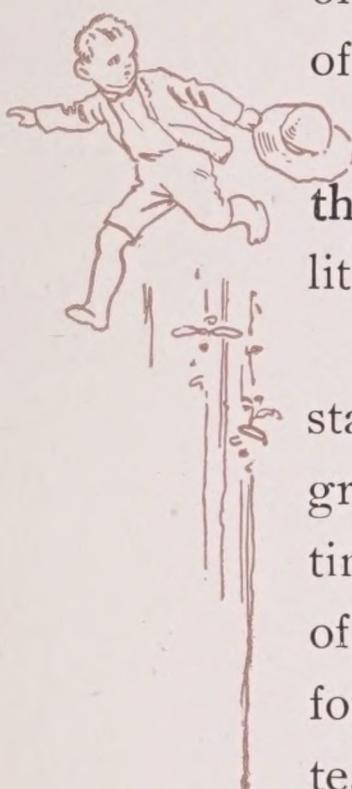
As soon as she had kissed her mother, she went to show her new treasure to Jamie. He came running to the fence with a piece of bread and butter in his hand, for he had not yet finished his breakfast; and when Annetta very carefully lifted up the lid of the box, he peeped in at the little prisoner.

"Isn't it cute?" he said, rubbing his hands on his overalls. "Will it lay eggs?"

"Not yet," said Annetta, pitying his ignorance; "it's too little. It will when it gets big."

At first they kept the chicken under a tub, with a hole sawed in the top through which they could observe its actions. A number of other children in the neighborhood came over, and, stooping down, put their eyes to the hole and looked at the little chicken very respectfully—all but Tommy Barnes, that is; when he thought Annetta was not looking, he tickled



A small illustration in the left margin shows a young boy in a light-colored shirt and trousers running towards the right. A girl with short hair, wearing a dark dress, is chasing him from behind. They appear to be in a garden or yard setting.

its legs with a straw. That was the beginning of the feud; then Annetta chased Tommy out of the gate, and threw a bone after him.

“Don’t you ever dare to step your foot in this yard again!” she said, stamping her own little feet wrathfully on the ground.

After that, Annetta and Tommy lived in a state of continual warfare, and when the chicken grew up, which she did in a remarkably short time, she led a miserable existence on account of this same little boy. When she went out for a pleasant morning walk in the alley, he teased her, and once he sicked his little yellow dog on her, and she had to leave a nice worm she had just scratched up, and run home in such an undignified way that all the other chickens laughed at her.

Annetta and Jamie comforted her and loved her very much, and looked forward with great pleasure to the time when she should lay them eggs, some of which they meant to sell; others they would eat for their breakfast. But al-

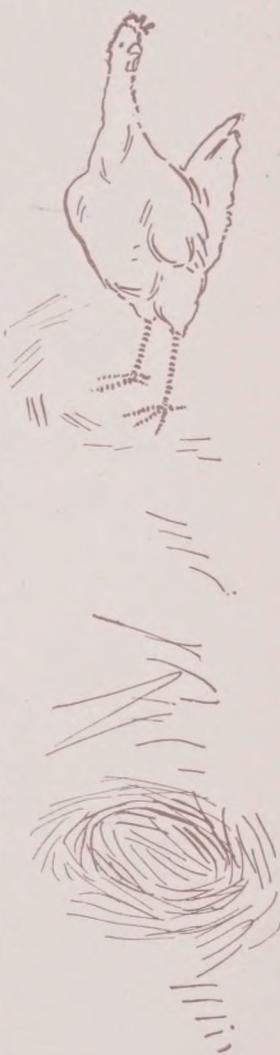




though Biddy, for that was her name, was now grown to be a fine large hen, she showed no disposition to carry out her part of the bargain. She seemed to realize, however, that this was the aim of a true hen's life, for when a friend of hers laid an egg, she would rejoice with her over the event, and cackle as loudly as though she had done the deed herself.

It was in vain that the children built her a nice nest, and reasoned with her ; she paid no attention to them, but went stepping about the yard, turning her head from side to side, growing fatter and more indolent as the time went on. The holidays had no effect on her. Easter aroused no answering enthusiasm in her breast.

That season the grocery men in the neighborhood drove a thriving business in chicken feed, for Jamie and Annetta spent all their money on rare cereals, recommended by the owner of the rabbit, as calculated to stimulate the ambition of a hen and make her lay eggs ; and Biddy ate the choice food, and en-





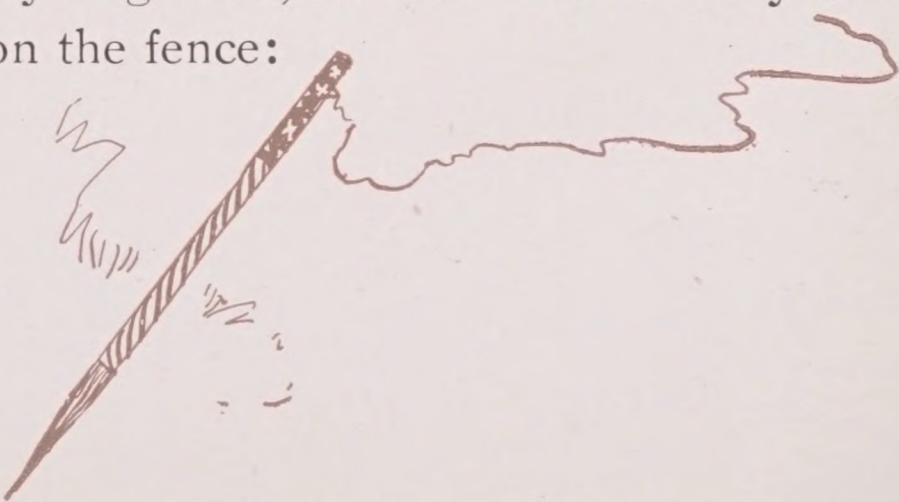
joyed it, but continued to lead a life of blissful idleness.

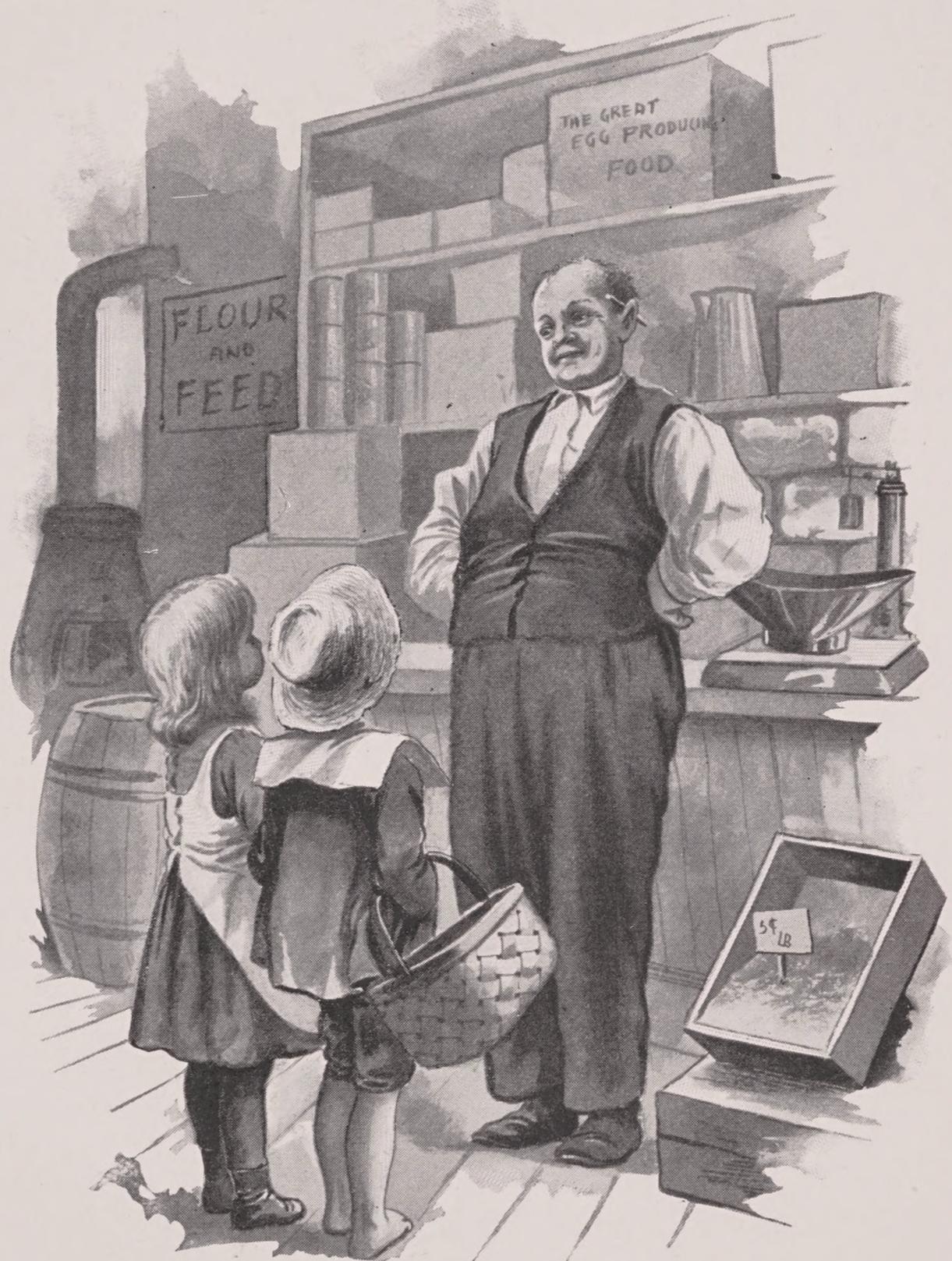
“We’ll have to cook her,” said Annetta’s father, laughing. “She’ll make a fine stew, she’s so big and fat.”

But this threat only served to throw the children into a state of hysterics. It didn’t trouble the hen in the least, for she knew very well she was perfectly safe, so long as she had two such good friends to watch over her.

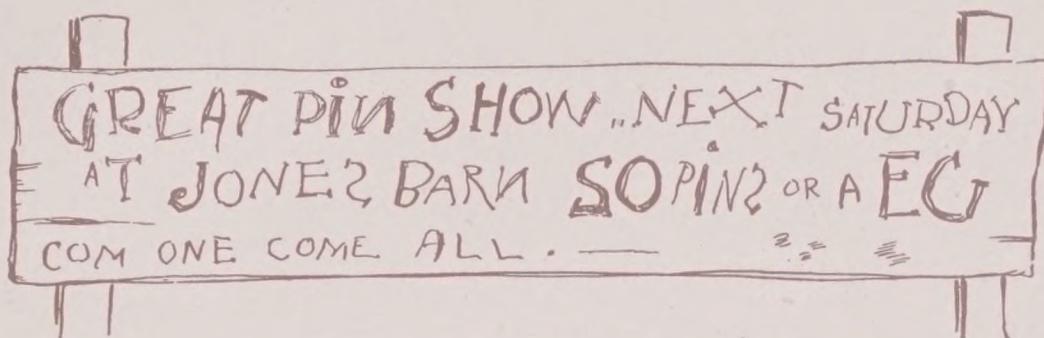
It was the first day of school. Jamie and Annetta started off quite cheerfully; each had a slate from which dangled a very long slate pencil with a patriotic cover of red and blue paper, and a very small sponge, and Jamie was carrying an apple which they meant to eat at recess.

When they reached the school-house, they found the children in great excitement; and well they might be, for this is what they saw nailed on the fence:









Now the Jones brothers, aged respectively nine and eleven, were famed far and wide for the excellence of their pin shows. To see Philip Jones walk on his hands, with his feet waving in the air, was alone worth the ticket money. This show was to be something rather extra, owing to the presence of a flip-flop artist from Knightstown,—a little boy who was visiting the Jones's,—and who had promised to assist at the performance. For this reason the price of admission had been raised from ten pins to twenty pins, or an egg.

As Annetta and Jamie went home at noon, they stopped to consult the owner of the rabbit.

"It seems to me," said Annetta, "that twenty pins is awful high. Don't you think so?"



"No, that's cheap," said the boy, oracularly, for he never wasted words. "I'd pay twenty-five pins any day. You see you can't get up a show like this for less ; if you do, the profits'll all be et up in no time."



This decided the children—they must go to the show at any price. So on that eventful Saturday afternoon, Jamie's mamma dressed him up and put a very clean waist on him, with the collar so stiff that it stood almost straight out all around, and made his little white head look like a stopper to a fancy bottle. Then he went over to wait for Annetta. Annetta's mother was combing her hair, and the little girl was sitting on a stool in front of her, holding the ribbons with which the two little braids were to be tied.

"I'm glad I'm not a girl," said Jamie, fervently, as he watched the performance, "I can 'ist brush my hair, then it's all right."

By and by the hair was neatly braided, then Annetta's mother counted out twenty pins and

stuck them in the little girl's apron, and the children started off, first saying good-bye to Biddy, whom they found carefully pluming her feathers in the back yard. They overtook a number of their friends all going the same way, walking very briskly and exchanging reminiscences of circuses and other shows they had attended. When they reached the alley upon which Jones's barn was, they saw a little boy sitting on a barrel ringing a bell, and enumerating in a shrill voice the many wonderful things to be seen inside the barn, for the trifling sum of twenty pins, or an egg.

A number of the performers were going in and out carrying mysterious bundles, and, although the children had seen them every day at school, they looked at them now with new interest, and a sort of halo hung about their heads, for these boys belonged to the show.

In the mouth of the alley stood the owner of the rabbit, with a long line of crooked and somewhat rusty pins drawn upon his suspen-





ders. Now, it was rumored that this boy had an uncle who had once attended a prize fight ; he was therefore held to be a great authority on all sporting matters, and was surrounded by a group of eager little children, who hoped that he might be induced to drop some remarks upon the subject.

"I saw a elephant onst in a p'rade," Jamie whispered to a little boy who stood beside him with an egg clasped in his hands; "and when he walked his skin 'ist wiggled, it was awful funny."

The big boy, overhearing this remark, fixed Jamie with his eye: "Did you ever see Herb Jones skin a cat?" he asked.

Jamie and Annetta shook their heads and admitted that this great privilege had been denied them.

"Well," said the big boy—then words failed him ; he could only draw a deep breath and look away in the distance, evidently meaning





to imply that one had only to see Herbert Jones skin a cat and then die.

By this time the excitement had grown to fever heat. The doors were opened and a bucket of water was set on the outside, in which to test the freshness of the eggs, and the children began to file up to get their tickets. One little girl who had broken her egg, was in deep distress. Annetta, who was very sorry for her, hastened to her rescue.

"I haven't any more pins," she said to the boy at the ticket office, "but if you can change this hat pin for me, I'll take her in with me."

"Change for a hat pin!" shouted the boy. Then he gave Annetta back five pins, and she and Jamie could never quite make out at what price they valued the hat pin.

By and by all difficulties were settled, and the children made their way into the barn. How deliciously cool it was, and what a delightful mystery hung about the stage! As the audience took their seats on the board



benches, the show began with a full French-harp orchestra, and all was going well, when Annetta heard a familiar clucking under her seat, and looking down saw that Biddy had followed them.

Annetta was very much alarmed, for she knew that was no place for a hen, and she instinctively felt that her presence would cause trouble ; so she tried to hide her under her apron, but Biddy had washed her feet nicely and smoothed her feathers before coming to the show, and saw no reason why her owners should be ashamed of her, so she raised her head up and looked boldly around her. Whenever anything in the performance appealed particularly to her, she expressed her pleasure by a low clucking ; but even then all might have been well had it not been for Tommy Barnes. As soon as he caught sight of Biddy, Annetta knew there would be trouble —and she was right. At first he put his hand





over his mouth and giggled; then he stood up.

"Annetta and Jamie went and brung their hen," he shouted.

Then the pent-up anxiety of the last half hour found vent. "That's right," cried the little girl, wriggling off her seat, "go and tell, tattle-tale!"

"You told on me when I took my dog to school," retorted Tommy.

"Well, this isn't any school," answered Annetta.

By this time the attention of the audience was so divided between the stage and disputants that the clown came down to see what was the trouble.

Now, in spite of his histrionic talent, the little clown had a very kind heart, and would have been perfectly willing for the hen to remain undisturbed, but he felt it was due to the strange boy from Knightstown to maintain the dignity of the show.



"I am sorry, Annetta," he said, with a judicial air, "but I guess she'll have to be put out. You see we can't afford to show any particularization in this thing. If we let your hen stay, it wouldn't be any time till the barn would be full of hens, and you know, yourself, that's no way to give a show."

"She isn't hurting anything," said Annetta.

"And we can't send her home," said Jamie, beginning to cry, "'cause she'd get lost if we did. She doesn't know the way. She's never been this far before."

Then the rest of the performers came down, and the audience took sides, and the dispute ran high. At last the strange boy was appealed to, and asked how such a case would be handled in Knightstown. But it seemed that no such occurrence had ever taken place there. He thought, though, to be fair to all parties, the hen should either be put out, or the owner be made to buy her a ticket; and as Annetta had not the price of a ticket about her, it





looked as though Tommy Barnes was going to triumph.

All this time Biddy had been sitting very still, looking about her thoughtfully with her little bright eyes. She felt very much annoyed and a little bit hurt, too, that her presence should have caused such a disturbance, for she had always been very welcome wherever she had chosen to go. But most of all, she was intensely displeased with Tommy Barnes, for she knew quite well that he was causing all her embarrassment. She remembered the many indignities that she and Annetta had suffered at his hands, and the morning she had been chased down the alley by his little dog rose up before her with painful distinctness.

All at once a bright idea seemed to strike her. She smiled to herself as she hopped down from the board and made her way cautiously and unobserved under the rows of seats and flew up on the stage. Nobody paid any attention to her (for the argument was running high by





this time), until all at once, over the shrill sound of the children's voices, there arose an exultant cackling. It was Biddy's cackle her owners knew quite well, for they had heard it often before. This, however, was no idle demonstration, for when Annetta and her friend went scrambling upon the stage, they found the hen standing complacently with her head on one side, and if she had worn a vest she certainly would have had her thumbs in her armholes. And well she might be proud, for there on some straw, in the very center of the circus ring, lay a beautiful, large, white egg.

Then Annetta and Jamie and their followers raised a shriek of triumph, and the little girl gathered the hen lovingly in her arms.

“Now ! now !” she cried, going up to Tommy Barnes, and wrinkling her nose to give more force to her remarks; “she’s paid her way now, I guess.”

But even then Tommy was not satisfied.

"Fetch that bucket of water," he said, "and let's see if it's a fresh one."

Several witnesses from both sides hastened to get the bucket, and set it on a bench. Then the children bent forward anxiously, and Biddy kept her eager little eyes fixed on her treasure while it was being tested. It went to the bottom with such directness of purpose that it proved itself beyond a doubt to be the very freshest egg offered in payment for a ticket that afternoon.

As soon as her right to attend the show had been thus honorably established, Biddy hopped off the stage and walked in a stately manner down the aisle, turning her head from side to side, and nodding it back and forth, so that the shining feathers on her neck slipped up and down and fitted into each other like the scales on a good knight's armor. She took her place openly and boldly between her proud owners, and sat there during the remainder of the performance, which she enjoyed, as she



afterwards remarked to a friend, "about as much as any entertainment it had ever been her pleasure to attend."

But the good effect of the pin show did not stop there, for that evening as the children were going home, with their little hot faces close together, talking over the merits of the various actors, Biddy came stepping along after them with a string tied to one of her legs, the other end of which Annetta held, and all the way she seemed to be thinking deeply. Whether she was impressed with the worthlessness of her life and had made up her mind to be a better and nobler hen, or whether she merely wanted to have an egg on hand in case another pin show should be given, I don't know; but I do know that from that time she abandoned her idle ways; and Jamie and Annetta never failed to find a fresh egg in the nest every morning, till by and by she came to be looked upon as the pride of the chicken yard.



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00025686172

